

INTERVIEW OF PEDRO JL IGITOL

by Howard P. Willens and Deanne C. Siemer

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- Siemer: Pedro JL Igitol is a director at the Hafa Adai Hotel in Saipan and has kindly agreed to an interview to help us with our historical project. Mr. Igitol was a delegate to the First Constitutional Convention and comes from a distinguished family that's long been resident on this island. Mr. Igitol, could we start first with where you were born and when.
- Igitol: Thank you. I was born here in Saipan on December 14, 1936.
- Siemer: Could you identify your parents for us.
- Igitol: Okay. My father is Pablo Igitol. His parents came from Woleai in the Yap district. My mother is Anna Sablan. They met here in Saipan, and this was where we started.
- Siemer: Were your father's parents born here?
- Igitol: No. My father's parents were born in Woleai. My father was born here, and so was my mother. Her mother came from the Mortlocks in Truk. Her father is a Sablan from here, Felix Sablan.
- Siemer: How many brothers and sisters did your father have?
- Igitol: My father had two other brothers and two sisters.
- Siemer: Who are they?
- Igitol: My father's sister was Maria Igitol Taitano, who passed away. Stephanie Igitol Lifoifoi also passed away. His brothers included Jose Igitol, who was lost during the war and we presume is dead. And another brother has passed away several years ago, Luis Igitol.
- Siemer: And what about your mother's brothers and sisters?
- Igitol: My mother's brother is Elias Sablan. There were other brothers, but I am not too familiar with them.
- Siemer: How about your own brothers and sisters?
- Igitol: I'm from a family of 14 children, eight of whom perished during the war or immediately after the war. The only surviving brothers and sisters are David Igitol, Martin Igitol, who works for Public Works, my sister Delphina who is married and living in the States now, Leo, Dionesa, and Rose, married to Tony Ogumoro.
- Siemer: All of them except one live here in Saipan?
- Igitol: Yes.
- Siemer: Where were you educated?
- Igitol: Originally here in Saipan, and then I went away to Guam. I went to the parochial school in Guam, the Catholic school, Father Duenas, and then back here again. The Trust Territory at that time had some money and sent me away to business college in Guam.
- Siemer: When did you graduate from high school?
- Igitol: 1957.

- Siemer: And then you went back to Guam to business school?
- Igitol: Business college, yes.
- Siemer: How long did you stay there?
- Igitol: One full year there.
- Siemer: How about your father and your mother? Were they educated here?
- Igitol: They were both educated here in the Japanese time. I think they just went to fifth and sixth grade in the Japanese time.
- Siemer: So both your mother and father spoke Japanese?
- Igitol: Yes.
- Siemer: What did your family do during Japanese times?
- Igitol: Farming and fishing.
- Siemer: Where was the farm?
- Igitol: In Tanapag. We had a family plot there that we cultivated.
- Siemer: Is that where the family is now?
- Igitol: Yes.
- Siemer: During Japanese time, did your father or mother or any of their relatives work for the Japanese?
- Igitol: No. My father was self-employed. He worked on the farm, and he went out and helped other people with their farms and got paid for helping other people to plow. He had a bullock that he used to plow the fields.
- Siemer: What happened to the family during the war?
- Igitol: Well, they got separated. Each went their own way. All the brothers and sisters were married, so they took care of their own family. We were separated until after the war, when we got reunited again.
- Siemer: Did they stay on Saipan during the war?
- Igitol: Everyone stayed in Saipan.
- Siemer: What happened to the family that there were so many casualties during the war?
- Igitol: I can think of a couple of things. The family did not have enough food or water. They were scared from all the bombs and things like that. And then I guess they had diseases and so a lot of them perished.
- Siemer: Did the Japanese take any of your family buildings or your family land during the war?
- Igitol: Yes. A portion of the farm was taken to use as bunkers for the Japanese ammunition.
- Siemer: Your family was right down near the beach. Where did the family go when the invasion came?
- Igitol: My father dug a shelter underground, and that's where we stayed at first. Then he moved us to another location and up to the hills in the big caves, and that's where we were when the American forces came in.
- Willens: When you came back from your college education in Guam, what was your job here?

- Igitol: I was the Deputy Chief of Procurement and Supply for the Trust Territory when I was sent to college. When I came back here, I resumed the position I had.
- Siemer: Who did you work for in the Trust Territory?
- Igitol: Mr. Harold Arnold was the Chief of Procurement and Supply.
- Willens: So you had that job in the late 1950s then?
- Igitol: 1960s.
- Willens: And how long did you stay in that position?
- Igitol: I stayed there until the Trust Territory [Interior] came. Then the Deputy High Commissioner appointed me Director for Real and Personal Property Management. That was in the late 1960s.
- Willens: Who was the Deputy High Commissioner at the time?
- Igitol: Mr. Goding appointed me to work directly under John Sablan's office, the late John Sablan. He's passed away.
- Willens: And you took that job in the late 1960s?
- Igitol: In the late 1960s, yes.
- Willens: And you stayed there for how long?
- Igitol: Stayed there until the CNMI came into being. Then Governor Carlos Camacho asked me to come work for him as the Chief of Procurement and Supply for the CNMI.
- Willens: And you took that job?
- Igitol: I took that job until I retired.
- Willens: How long then did you work for the Commonwealth government?
- Igitol: I stayed there until 1983, September 1983 when I retired.
- Siemer: But you didn't stop working.
- Igitol: No. I learned that if you stop working, then everything stops. Your system stops. And so I decided to continue on. I went to work for Continental for five years.
- Willens: For the airline or for the hotel?
- Igitol: Continental Airlines. I was Terminal Operations Manager.
- Willens: And where did you go from there?
- Igitol: Here to the hotel.
- Willens: Here to the Hafa Adai Hotel.
- Igitol: Yes.
- Willens: What's your position here?
- Igitol: I'm a member of the Board of Directors and also Managing Director for Operations, Public Relations, and Employee Relations.
- Willens: During the years that you worked for the Trust Territory in the 1960s, did you have any affiliation with one of the political parties here in the Northern Marianas?
- Igitol: I have been a member of the Republican Party for a long time, since its inception until now. I'm still a Republican.

- Willens: Do you remember it being formed?
- Igitol: No. My uncle, Elias Sablan, was one of the founders of what was called the Progressive Party, which then became the Republican Party. But I was not there for the formation of it.
- Willens: Were you one of those who believed, along with your uncle, that a direct affiliation with the United States was desirable?
- Igitol: Yes.
- Willens: Why did you have that feeling rather than the affiliation with Guam that people talked about?
- Igitol: Well, I'll answer the second question first. To go with Guam would be joining other families under the same flag, but going directly with the United States gives you the same level as Guam. We were told (and I believe) that if we were to be affiliated with Guam, then we would be treated as second class to Guamanians, you know, sometimes third class, especially the Carolinians maybe would be less than second class. So we did not think it was a good idea.
- Willens: Did you ever run for office for the Saipan Municipal Council or for the District Legislature?
- Igitol: At one time I was asked by the group to run, and I didn't have my heart in running for that office at that time, but I ran. I did run.
- Willens: Was it for the District Legislature?
- Igitol: The District Legislature.
- Willens: The District Legislature during the 1960s was largely run by the Popular Party. Is that correct?
- Igitol: That's right.
- Willens: Do you remember who you ran against?
- Igitol: No, I don't remember.
- Siemer: Did your brothers run for office back then?
- Igitol: No. My brothers were real young then. David and I are ten years apart. He just ran for the Constitutional Convention and the Municipal Council.
- Willens: When you were working for the Trust Territory during I guess the 1960s and into the 1970s, what was your assessment of the Trust Territory government and the way it administered the Trust Territory?
- Igitol: I felt that the Trust Territory did not do too much out here. They sent people out here supposedly to do a job on infrastructure and all those things. But it did not get done. Those things were absent. Even when the Commonwealth took over from the Trust Territory, it was still not there. The schools were not built, the roads were dilapidated, the water system was not good. They were supposed to have all this money to improve the system, the infrastructure. Nothing was done.
- Willens: Do you think it was a lack of money?
- Igitol: I don't think it was a lack of money. I thought that it was a lack of know-how of people to do the job really and the interest of the people to do the job.

- Siemer: Did the administrators who were sent out here have the experience needed to develop infrastructure?
- Igitol: Some of them I believe were experienced. Some of them I believe were sent out here just to come out here. Maybe they were taken out of positions in the States and sent out here just to let somebody else fill the job in the States. I worked with a lot of those people. Just drive around; they don't do anything. Just get in their cars and drove around with their families and go picnic.
- Siemer: In the 1960s when you started working for the Trust Territory government, how did they do at training and giving opportunities to local people?
- Igitol: Some people like Richard Kanost, who was a really good person, started training and development for the Micronesians. He conducted training and brought in specialists from off-island to do training to improve the local people. Other than Mr. Kanost and Mrs. Johnson
- Willens: Mr. Johnson?
- Igitol: Mrs. Johnson. There was a lady who was out here also. They were here during the Navy time, and after the husband retired they came back over again and helped out in the training.
- Willens: How about the person you worked for? It sounds as though you had a fairly high position in Procurement.
- Igitol: Yes. Mr. Arnold was a good trainer. He was a good boss. He provided me with all the training that I needed to fill the positions and to work on my own. Many times he went off-island, and I'd take over. I did all right, with his training of course.
- Siemer: In those days, did the Trust Territory people reach out to find Carolinians to train and educate?
- Igitol: No.
- Siemer: There were a number of Carolinians who were very good at administration and finance. How did those people get into the government?
- Igitol: Those people started from the very bottom of the terrace, and they went up, worked their way up. Ben Fitial, for instance, was very successful. He went away to school at the University of Guam, and he came back here and started working and proved himself qualified for jobs, so he was given those jobs. But then again, that's when other local people had taken responsibilities of some key positions. Then they started hiring the locals. But during the early Trust Territory time, the locals were for menial work, and the others were sitting in the office here.
- Willens: How did you feel about the differential pay scale?
- Igitol: It was frustrating, to say the least. There were three structures: one for the statesiders, one for Micronesians, and another for third country workers.
- Willens: The Micronesians, including the Northern Marianas people, were at the bottom?
- Igitol: Yes. Even when I was Deputy Chief of Procurement and Supply, I was still Micronesian, so my American clerk is higher than me in pay. He made even more money than I did.
- Willens: Was that something that you felt free to complain about?
- Igitol: We complained. We asked about it and they'd say well, you know, he's an American citizen and you're not.

- Willens: In the 1960s, the funding available to the Trust Territory increased several times over from about \$7 million to \$50 million by the end of the decade. As I understand you, you don't think that additional money really made much of an impact.
- Igitol: No. There had been a lot of impact studies, one after another. All of the studies were shelved, and I think if you go into the libraries you will find those studies still there. Nothing happened.
- Willens: Do you remember meeting people from Nathan Associates who came out in the middle 1960s?
- Igitol: I believe I did. I believe I met with some of them. But all they did were studies after studies, and nothing was implemented.
- Willens: Were any of the studies good, in your judgment?
- Igitol: I believe so. I believe many of those studies were good, but the implementation was not there.
- Willens: Some of the documents indicate that the High Commissioners at the time, including Johnston who came in 1969 or thereabouts, never wanted to plan for the future because they didn't know how long the Trust Territory was going to be in existence. Do you have any recollection of that kind?
- Igitol: Not much, but I believe that reflects their thinking then. They're here temporarily, and they may be relocating elsewhere, so they didn't want to do a permanent plan for the Marianas or the Trust Territory then.
- Willens: Do you have any recollection of High Commissioner Johnston as an administrator?
- Igitol: Yes.
- Willens: What's your recollection of him?
- Igitol: He was a good friend of many people. He went out and traveled with people, and he makes friends. But as far as carrying out responsibilities, I still don't see anything.
- Siemer: Do you think he had the training to be an executive at that level?
- Igitol: I think he was a public relations officer.
- Willens: Did he come down into the villages and meet the people, or did he stay very much up on Capitol Hill, as you recall it?
- Igitol: He came down to the villages. He made a lot of local friends. The first High Commissioner, Mr. Goding, never came down to the villages.
- Willens: He had a Deputy High Commissioner named Jose Benitez. Do you have any recollection of him?
- Igitol: Yes.
- Willens: What's your recollection?
- Igitol: Benitez was not an administrator. But he went out, a lot of time he went with the local people just to be with them, use them in other ways. I know he used to come down in white clothes, gloves, and made inspections in the offices. But other than that . . .
- Willens: So you had to keep your desk very clean for him?
- Igitol: Clean, yes.

- Willens: At one point for a brief period there was a Deputy High Commissioner from Guam, Richard Taitano. Do you remember him?
- Igitol: Yes. He was a finance man, a financial genius. He was good in money, not for other work.
- Willens: During the 1960s, political status did become an important issue in all of Micronesia. Did you have any sense as to what the people in the Trust Territory thought was best for Micronesia?
- Igitol: Everybody was talking about free association with the United States. That was the talk of many, many people in Micronesia, including Palau, Truk, and other FSM people.
- Willens: Did you have any views at the time as to whether keeping all of Micronesia together would be a good idea?
- Igitol: Yes. Personally, yes, because I had family in other Micronesian islands.
- Willens: Had you visited with your family there?
- Igitol: I'd like to keep all of them together, but it was next to impossible, I guess.
- Siemer: How close were those relatives who still lived back in the Yap district or the Truk district? Were they second cousins?
- Igitol: Second, third cousins.
- Siemer: Did any of them come here?
- Igitol: Yes, many of them had been here.
- Siemer: Were they hired by the Trust Territory as administrators?
- Igitol: They had jobs back in their own home islands, and they came here on official business and visited with us. But some of them stayed and got jobs here.
- Siemer: Did many of the Carolinian families here have close relatives back there?
- Igitol: Yes.
- Siemer: Who would come and visit and stay with families here?
- Igitol: Yes. Back then, people didn't have enough money I guess to travel, so whenever the government would give them the opportunity to travel on official business, that's the time they came around and visited with the families. Otherwise, they don't. Nowadays I guess they're finding more money, so they travel a lot.
- Willens: Was it your feeling in the late 1960s and the early 1970s that the Territorial Party as a whole wanted to try to keep the entire Trust Territory together as a single entity?
- Igitol: I'm not sure. But I know that my uncle, being part Carolinian also, would like to have that, yes.
- Willens: What do you think were the causes that led to the separation of the Northern Marianas from the rest of the Trust Territory?
- Igitol: Even from the time that the Northern Marianas people wanted to unify with Guam, that time when we took a vote and we were defeated, they had wanted to change status and go with the United States. The Micronesian people then, the other Micronesian islands, still wanted to be freely associated, not be American citizens. But at that time, we were already thinking we wanted to be U.S. citizens.

- Willens: Did you personally think that U.S. citizenship was desirable?
- Igitol: Yes. We would get to practice the freedom of doing what we wanted, and everything that the Americans have now we can also have.
- Willens: Was it economic advantages that you and others thought would come with citizenship?
- Igitol: Some economic advantages. The elders were thinking more on the Japanese for the economy than the U.S., but the younger ones were thinking differently. They said that the U.S. would give them more economic breaks.
- Willens: Many people complained that the Trust Territory Administration held back economic development in the Northern Marianas and the Trust Territory by not letting foreign investment in. Did you have any sense of that?
- Igitol: The Trust Territory government, as I mentioned earlier, didn't want to do a lot of improvement here. They tried to prevent others from coming in to develop the islands or to improve the system, the living conditions. I don't know how many of these developers tried to come in. I only know that it was a hard thing to do. They were given red tape after red tape trying to get applications and permits to come out here. It was very hard.
- Siemer: When you did procurement back in those days, were you allowed to procure materials and supplies from other countries like Japan or the Philippines?
- Igitol: Japan and mostly U.S. We'd buy U.S. materials, and whatever we could not get from the U.S., we would go to Japan, especially for machinery and other like items. We used the General Services Administration a lot, so most of our materials and whatever needed supplies, we'd get from GSA.
- Siemer: Back when you were in that job, were there already Japanese who had significant business contacts here in Saipan?
- Igitol: Very few. Joeten had one, and it was in the private sector. Joeten and [M.S.] Villagomez, I guess those are the only ones. Maybe a couple more locals had contacts in Japan, and they got items shipped down here to them from Japan.
- Siemer: Did the local businessmen back then tend to look more to Japan than they did to the States?
- Igitol: A lot of them, yes.
- Siemer: Why was that?
- Igitol: Because it was closer. It took less time to bring materials out here than from the States. At that time, it took anywhere from six to eight months to bring out anything from the States. That's why even the government, when we rely on GSA to help us, they gave us six months lead time.
- Siemer: How long typically did it take to get things from Japan or the Philippines?
- Igitol: Within a month I suppose.
- Willens: Did you know any of the members of the Congress of Micronesia from the other districts?
- Igitol: Some of them.
- Willens: We just happened to be over in Ponape and talked to Andon Amaraich.
- Igitol: Andon is a relative of mine.

- Willens: Did you ever discuss independence with him as a future political status?
- Igitol: No, I never did. But I heard some of them wanted to become independent, and I don't know how they could survive to be independent. At one time there was some talk on the island here about independence. It never got anywhere, because we didn't think it was good.
- Siemer: People here seem to be very practical about that and very oriented toward what was possible. Some of the rhetoric in the other islands seemed to be a little bit more theoretical.
- Igitol: I guess it has something to do with the youngsters being sent off to school and they come back with all this knowledge and ideas. So it was giving the parents something to think about.
- Willens: In 1972 the United States did agree to separate negotiations with the Northern Marianas that resulted in the Covenant. There was something called the Micronesian Political Status Commission. Felix Rabauliman was one of the members. Was Felix Rabauliman someone who you talked to from time to time about political status?
- Igitol: No. In those days they were busy with their work, and we were busy with ours. We hardly saw each other. In fact, Eddie Pangelinan, who chaired the Political Status, from time to time went around the villages and tried to talk to the elders, hardly to the youngsters. But he went around and talked with the elders to try to get their feelings on matters that he thought necessary to conduct their decisions.
- Siemer: Where did Felix Rabauliman's family live?
- Igitol: They lived on a hill, now Capitol Hill. They used to be down in San Jose, Oleai.
- Willens: Was he from a different clan?
- Igitol: Yes. He's from the District 4 Carolinians. The other side is the Tanapag Carolinians. We all come from different clans.
- Willens: Did you feel that the Marianas Political Status Commission made an effort to keep people informed as to what it was doing?
- Igitol: I believe yes. I think they did. They came out with papers, radio programs. Then they went around to the villages and conducted hearings.
- Willens: By the time the Marianas Political Status Commission was negotiating with the United States, had you come to the view that a separate status for the Northern Marianas was acceptable?
- Igitol: I thought that the Status Commission was doing a good job by selecting this status, that they wanted to go with the United States. When they were going around the villages—it's very hard when you go to the public hearings, because they were talking to a multitude of people. They were talking on the speakers, the microphones, and even though they ask do you have any questions, nobody would dare raise a question, because to stand up in the middle of all these people here and try to talk was something that the people were not used to. So each one of them had their separate questions which they didn't ask and they eventually accepted everything that the Commission said, or wanted.
- Siemer: What were the principal questions that you remember people having back then when Eddie would come around and try to talk to people about what was going on with the Covenant negotiations?

- Igitol: First of all, they didn't know what kind of status they were going to get even if they became American citizens. A lot of them said that okay, so we become U.S. citizens. That's going to be second class citizens because the Americans who are in the United States are first class citizens, and the people out here would be second class or third class citizens. A lot of them even heard of the black people in the States who were considered not first class. Everybody thought they were laborers, and the white Americans were the people who were really U.S. citizens, first class citizens. So these stories got to them, and they had their doubts. Should we or should we not. But they never asked the questions what do we get, what can we get, and how are we going to get there. They were worried that if they became U.S. citizens, then they would get exploited. Everybody would come out here and tell them what to do and what not to do. You cannot do this. You come work for me.
- Siemer: You worked closely with Americans. Did people come around and ask you what you thought?
- Igitol: No, they didn't. They never did. In fact, the people who we had in the Procurement and Supply at that time, never bothered to ask questions or even tell us what's good or what's bad about becoming U.S. citizens. They were happy in what they were doing.
- Willens: Did you feel that some of the local people would have preferred staying in the Trust Territory?
- Igitol: No. I believe that most of the people wanted to get out of the Trust Territory, because the Trust Territory was not doing anything for them. In fact, if not the United States, they wanted to go with Japan, so Japan could do something for them. A lot of the stories that the elders were talking about were [about Japan], even snails—you can make money on the snails, because the Japanese buy them. Tangantangan trees out here, you cut them down, clear your land, the Japanese will buy the tangantangan. So they would talk about how they could make money, how they could survive. The Trust Territory was not doing anything for them.
- Willens: When the Covenant was signed, there was some considerable opposition in the Carolinian community. What is your recollection of the basis for that?
- Igitol: The Carolinians were people who believed at the time they were destined to be followers. Whatever happened, they would just go along with. They believed that they would become slaves, laborers all the time. They believed that people would come and take away their property, their land.
- Willens: Were they afraid of the Chamorro majority doing this?
- Igitol: No, not Chamorros really, because they had lived with the Chamorros for a long time. They were afraid of outsiders coming in, the Americans and other people coming in and displacing them from their properties.
- Siemer: Was that because the Japanese had displaced them from some of their property?
- Igitol: And I think some of that belief was there. They still believed that what the Japanese did, the American would do the same thing.
- Siemer: Did the Japanese also require Carolinians to work for them?
- Igitol: Yes. Everybody. The Japanese used all of the people here as laborers.
- Willens: Forced labor?
- Igitol: Forced labor.

- Willens: Any compensation?
- Igitol: Very small compensation.
- Siemer: So those were the primary worries at the time of the plebiscite, that the Americans would act like the Japanese had because they were more developed economically?
- Igitol: They said that once we become U.S. citizens, then I will become U.S. property. So the U.S. government would come out here and do whatever they wanted to do.
- Siemer: Did people understand what the Commission had negotiated with respect to the land alienation and protections that were included in the Covenant?
- Igitol: No. I believe some did understand, but a lot of people didn't. I said earlier that people in Saipan are followers. They just follow whatever the officials would tell them to do. Even though they had questions, they didn't ask questions; they just followed. They may be grumbling, but they followed.
- Siemer: When the Covenant was signed, did anybody make a specific effort to find out what the Carolinian concerns were and try to explain those?
- Igitol: I think Mr. Rabauliman did, along with some of the other members [of the Commission]. I believe they spoke to the Carolinians and tried to explain what it was all about. But I think some of the Carolinians then turned and believed whatever they told them. I know that they came to Tanapag, but the people in Tanapag just didn't care one way or the other. They said, whatever you want.
- Siemer: Oscar Rasa seemed to make a particular effort to get Carolinians to vote against the Covenant. Why was he effective in the Carolinian community?
- Igitol: Oscar is from Ponape. His mother's family is here. His father's family is from Ponape. He grew up in Ponape. He is married to a Carolinian family—Pat Seman is his wife. So he is accepted in the Carolinian community. Of course, his wife's family is always with him. But they go into the Carolinian community and talk about those things, they listen to you.
- Siemer: When the vote on the Covenant was over, you ran for the Constitutional Convention. Why did you decide that that was a good idea?
- Igitol: Well, actually I did not decide. I was in the States. I was away for about two months. When I came back, my friends told me that I should go and join the campaign, because I was a candidate. I said candidate for what. And I was told they signed me up for the Constitutional Convention. I said no, I don't want it. But they forced me, so I went. Fortunately, I got elected.
- Siemer: Who signed you up?
- Igitol: My friends from Tanapag. They just signed me up and put my name in and everything else. They paid my fee.
- Siemer: What were you doing in the States at the time?
- Igitol: There was a conference that I had to go attend—several conferences actually, and one seminar. So when I came back, I found myself in the middle of this.
- Siemer: How did you campaign back then?
- Igitol: We went from village to village as a group, the Republicans. There were 51 of us. We would go up and talk to the community, the villagers. We'd get no questions; we would just talk to them and tell them what we thought we could do.

- Siemer: What did you think you could do at the time?
- Igitol: Well, I thought that I would try and work together with the group and come out with a good Constitution to help the Legislature do its job. There wasn't much we could say specifically. In those days we hardly knew what a Constitution meant. We were all new to this game, and we didn't know. We said all right, we'll go and help each other.
- Willens: Were there any issues on which the Republican candidates took a different view than the Democratic candidates?
- Igitol: Yes. There were quite a few issues there that differed. The Republican group talked about local government. We have to reduce the government, of course, so we were looking at doing away with the municipal government and only have commissioners. Commissioners were closer to the people in the villages. They were the ones who could see what the problems were in the villages and report to the government that this is what is needed to be done.
- Siemer: The Territorial Party did extremely well in that election, and you had almost two-thirds of the Constitutional Convention delegates. To what did you attribute that success in that election?
- Igitol: Family, friends, openness I guess. We went out en masse and talked heart-to-heart with the community.
- Siemer: All the Territorial Party candidates would go together?
- Igitol: Every night.
- Siemer: That must have been a large caravan.
- Igitol: Every night. We would pour our hearts to them, tell them what we thought. Not only me, but all the other people were talking them and telling them that we needed to protect our land, we needed to make sure that our children did well in the future.
- Willens: Who were the leaders of the Territorial Party that organized that? Was Larry Guerrero one of the leaders?
- Igitol: Larry Guerrero, Dr. Palacios, Oly Borja at the time was also a leader of the group. We had some other people helping us in the back, not running in the Constitutional Convention campaign, but just helping us in the back.
- Willens: You mentioned two names of people who are now deceased. I'd appreciate your recollections about Oly Borja, for example. How would you describe him?
- Igitol: Oly was a very aggressive person. He was sharp. I guess he knew what he wanted. He was one of those who really got people to support the group, because every night he would talk to people about why we should do this and why we shouldn't. He was dynamic, I guess.
- Willens: How about Dr. Palacios?
- Igitol: Dr. Palacios was respected. He was in the medical profession. And also he was respected in the Carolinian community, having Carolinian blood in him.
- Siemer: What was his family connection to the Carolinian community?
- Igitol: His mother I think was Carolinian.
- Siemer: From where? Not Tanapag?
- Igitol: No, from Chalan Kanoa, District 1.

- Siemer: Were the voters enthusiastic back then for that election?
- Igitol: There were a lot of heated arguments between the two parties, so everybody was participating. They would all come out and vie for certain offices, and they would get their own supporters and follow them all over the place.
- Siemer: Did the Popular Party candidates go to different villages on the nights that you were in one village, they'd be in a different village?
- Igitol: A different village. We all agreed not to meet in one village. There would have been war.
- Willens: Did that ever happen, when the two groups met in the same village?
- Igitol: Yes. Not the same village, but close. District 3 and District 2, for instance, were close by. There was rock throwing and everything else. Then some people started blasting each other on the air, you did this and you did that.
- Siemer: Over the loudspeaker system?
- Igitol: Over the loudspeakers. So we all decided to stay far away from each other on nights that we'd go out and campaign.
- Willens: Who were the leaders of the Democratic Party in those days?
- Igitol: It was Mitch Pangelinan.
- Willens: Was Dr. Camacho active at that point?
- Igitol: Well, Dr. Camacho was not really active, but he ran and he won. He was not really active. There were other people, Danny Muna was one of them.
- Siemer: After the election was over and your colleagues in the Territorial Party had won a large majority, did you Territorial Party delegates get together before the Convention to talk about what you were going to do?
- Igitol: Yes.
- Siemer: Where did you meet? Do you remember?
- Igitol: Well, we went down to the party headquarters.
- Siemer: Where was that at the time?
- Igitol: Oh, different places. Some people would say over here, then we'd go. Some nights we'd end up at former Governor Pete Tenorio's house. And sometimes we'd end up in school classrooms and have meetings there.
- Siemer: What kinds of things were you discussing before the Convention got under way?
- Igitol: First of all, they started talking committees, who would chair them, who would be officers, and what kind of assistance we would need. Then they started talking about the type of bills to be introduced or what do you call them
- Siemer: Proposals.
- Igitol: Proposals. And from time to time we would meet, even after the Convention started. We would take one committee and meet with the officials and say okay, this is what we want. Politics was very strong. The leaders would basically tell us this and that. And we would start arguing among ourselves, and sometimes they got what they wanted.

Siemer: There were a lot of Territorial Party delegates from Rota and Tinian. I think Joe Cruz was the only non-Territorial Party delegate from those two islands. Did you from the Territorial Party on Saipan meet with the Rota and Tinian Territorial delegates?

Igitol: Yes. We would meet occasionally and discuss what we wanted. But Rota and Tinian had their own priorities. They wanted something that we in our group didn't think they should have. Remember when they walked out, the people of Rota and Tinian walked out? Because they couldn't have everything they wanted.

Siemer: Did you know before the Convention what Benjamin Manglona and his Rota people were going to ask for?

Igitol: I had an idea what they wanted, because every time we had a meeting they would always talk about something else, you know, what about Rota, what about Tinian. So I figured that he and Joe [Cruz] would be asking for some special things for Rota and Tinian. We didn't know at the time what he wanted, but I had an idea he would be asking. Sure enough, he came out with his own priorities.

Willens: During those years, the Rota and Tinian people had complained about not getting enough attention from Saipan or the Trust Territory government. You happened to be in a position where you may have a judgment on that. Did you think the Rota and Tinian people got their fair share of infrastructure and TTPI funds?

Igitol: I don't think so. I don't think they had their fair share. I would agree with the people of Rota and Tinian that they were really not getting what they needed—schools, roads and everything else. Maybe because there were not many people in Tinian, not many people in Rota, so everything was being concentrated on Saipan. But that's true. When I was in the Trust Territory government, the requests that would come in from Rota were very small. They only wanted this, they only wanted that. So some of the blame should be on their own officials there, too, for not requesting more or going to the central government for more assistance. But then again, the central government should have known that these people also needed infrastructure. That takes us back to what we talked about in the Trust Territory. The people come over here, they are just content with what they are doing, and they are not doing enough to help build the infrastructure.

Siemer: Did you think that would continue once you were in charge of your own government? Did you think that neglect of Rota and Tinian would continue?

Igitol: To some degree. Even now there's still some neglect there. Just recently they were talking about the dialysis equipment on Rota, and somebody here in Saipan said no, no, they don't need it there. Who are these people to say the people in Rota don't need it? And the X-ray machines that have broken down in Rota are still not fixed. They have to send people up here for X-rays. That kind of things, you know. Thank goodness they have better classrooms now on Tinian. The educational facilities are much better than Saipan. I'm glad for that. But for a long time those people went without adequate classrooms.

Siemer: You were on the Governmental Institutions Committee?

Igitol: With Joe Mafnas.

Siemer: Your Committee had many of the tough problems. The Executive Branch, the size of the House, all of those kinds of things.

Igitol: Yes.

Siemer: It seemed that you were very successful in persuading the Rota people in the Committee. You didn't have too much trouble until you took things to the floor.

- Igitol: We had a couple of very understanding Rotanese on our Committee, Greg Calvo and David Maratita. Both were educated Rotanese, so whenever we would discuss things, they would see the merit and the need for it. We gave in to some of their requests.
- Siemer: Do you remember the discussion about how big the House of Representatives should be?
- Igitol: Yes. It was one of the heated arguments that we had in the Committee. Several of us wanted the unicameral legislature to keep the costs down and only a small number of representatives. But politics again came in. No, no, no, we cannot have this because all these people have to have jobs. So many Congressmen, so many former politicians wanted to get in.
- Siemer: That was the principal concern, that there be more places in the House of Representatives so more people would have jobs?
- Igitol: Yes.
- Siemer: It was always hard to figure out why Rota walked out over one job in the House of Representatives.
- Igitol: Because they didn't think that one vote would get them anything in the House of Representatives. One time there was almost a fistfight in the Committee, arguments over it.
- Siemer: Was Joe Mafnas a good Chairman?
- Igitol: He was a good Chairman. Every time something would happen, he would say wait, wait, wait. Let's take a break. We would all break. Then we would come back again. He's a nice guy.
- Siemer: Do you remember the discussion about how services should be delivered on Rota and Tinian?
- Igitol: Oh, yes. Now I remember. That was one of the big arguments, again, because Rota wanted a Lt. Governor for Rota, a Lt. Governor for Tinian, a Lt. Governor for Saipan, and a Governor.
- Siemer: What did you think of that?
- Igitol: I didn't think it would work. In fact, I think some of us again were arguing that instead of governors and the mayors, for instance, we should have a commissioner [in each village] and chief commissioner for the island. These people would have direct communication with the Governor. We thought that was enough for them [Rota and Tinian]. But no. They wanted something big. They wanted to have Lt. Governors on both islands. So there was a heated argument about that.
- Siemer: That was a very long discussion, too, wasn't it?
- Igitol: At the end, that's one of the reasons that the Rota people walked out. Because they didn't get what they wanted. We did not give in to them. We told them no.
- Willens: Did you ever talk to any of the Rota people who did walk out to find out exactly why they left?
- Igitol: Yes. This is one of the reasons they gave us—because they wanted more than we would give them.

- Siemer: When the Convention had finished its work on the first draft, you took a break and went out to have some public hearings. Did you hear from people in the Carolinian community at that time about things they did not like about what was in the draft?
- Igitol: I think Luis Limes and Ben Fitial went out to the Carolinian community. I did not go with them. I was assigned with another group to go someplace else. But those to visit the Carolinian community were Luis Limes and Ben Fitial.
- Siemer: They came back to the Convention after those public hearings with a proposal for an Office of Carolinian Affairs.
- Igitol: I was one of the proponents for that. We thought that because the Carolinians were then looked down on, we thought that we needed an office there to hear the problems of the Carolinians and make sure that those problems got to the central government and were heard. We didn't think of it to become permanent. We just wanted an office established so the Carolinians would have a place to go to. Many Carolinians then did not speak good Chamorro, let alone English, so we needed an office.
- Siemer: But you thought it might be temporary?
- Igitol: I was suggesting it to be a temporary thing, but they made it permanent. They made it one of the proposals and it passed.
- Siemer: You were very successful in getting your colleagues in the Convention to pass that. Even though there were very few Carolinian delegates, everyone voted for it. How did you do that?
- Igitol: I don't know. We just had a lot of friends, I guess, and the Republican delegates then needed our support later on in their political lives. So that's one of the things that got us what we wanted.
- Siemer: How do you think that office has worked out?
- Igitol: I think it has worked out very well. I think the office is well run now.
- Siemer: Is it effective in expressing the views of the Carolinian community in the government?
- Igitol: Yes.
- Willens: Do you remember getting two volumes of 1,000 pages of briefing materials before the Convention?
- Igitol: Yes. Two volumes, thick ones.
- Willens: Did you actually have a chance to use those briefing materials at all?
- Igitol: No. I did go through them, but was not able to read all of them. I just went through them, and I think I was able to use a couple. And whenever I had some questions, I would go back and look at the materials again.
- Willens: It was always hard to figure out exactly what was going to be most useful to the delegates.
- Igitol: Not knowing what the group was going to propose, but I found it handy.
- Siemer: What did you think of the homestead proposals that were made in the First Constitutional Convention?
- Igitol: Twenty-five years. I think that was a good thing. I think I stood up and spoke a little bit on that, too, one time. I believed that the locals didn't know the value of the money. Somebody would come in with dollar bills and off it [the land] goes. Even now, we find it

very difficult to understand people who sell their lands and then ask the government for a homestead again. Some of them were lucky enough to get another homestead from the government.

Siemer: Second round?

Igitol: Yes. And just a few months ago, I saw in the newspaper where they listed a whole bunch of people who were applying for homesteads. Some of those people who lived in Guam for a long time sold their properties here and now they're asking for another homestead. I don't know if they're going to get them or not. But that was one of the reasons I agreed with the 25 years proposal. They should hold for at least the first 25 years, not to sell the homestead land that was given to them. We were afraid people would just come in and offer \$5,000, off it goes. Back then I was holding several [pieces of land] myself, which I bought for \$500, \$100. People would borrow money from me and they were not able to repay me, so I was just holding those lands, until my mom forced me to return them, give them all back to the original owners.

Siemer: When the public land article finally came up for a vote, you abstained. Was there something that you were dissatisfied with about the way the public land article finally came out?

Igitol: One was whether or not a corporation should be considered a person or

Siemer: There were some people who thought that very detailed guidelines should be in the Constitution, and other people thought that should be left to the Legislature.

Igitol: Oh, yes. Well, in those days we were all new. The legislators were fairly young people. They didn't know the value of land. And for them to decide what was good or how to go about giving lands away and things like that was scary, scary to me. Because I was much older than some of the legislators who were sitting up there in those days. And for them to decide what to do with the land and to give it away and at what price. I said no, I was not going to vote for that.

Siemer: What did you think at that time about the Ken Jones operation on Tinian?

Igitol: This is what I meant with people coming in with the money, and everything goes. He took a big property there, and only paid a very minimal amount. I think a lot of those properties could have been turned into housing developments for the people. Instead of just living on one side of the island, the housing should be scattered all over the island.

Siemer: Was the Ken Jones operation one of the reasons why you were worried about what would happen to the land?

Igitol: One of those. And we knew that the Japanese were interested. In fact, Joeten was already looking into the possibility of going with a Japanese group to acquire properties here. Even though Joeten becomes a partner in this group, it would be Japanese. Those were things that we were looking at. A couple of us did not vote for the measure.

Siemer: When the Constitutional Convention was over, how did you feel about the overall product?

Igitol: I thought it was a good thing. Even though there were some things there that we did not vote for, we did not agree on, overall I thought it was a good work.

Siemer: Did you work on the public education after the Convention?

Igitol: Yes, on the translation part of it with Father Jose Villagomez and Jesus Villagomez. We worked on the translation.

Siemer: How was the work of the Convention received in the Carolinian community? Was there opposition when the Constitution came out?

Igitol: Not much opposition. The Carolinian translation came out and was passed out to the Carolinian leaders, and the translations were accepted. The Carolinian leaders were talking among themselves and also explaining to the others what it was all about.

Siemer: There seemed to be a much higher vote for the Constitution in the Carolinian districts than there was for the Covenant.

Igitol: Yes. The Carolinians looked to the clan leaders, and when the clan leaders explained to them what it was. Everybody agreed it was okay.

Willens: There was an election in 1977 for the first government in the Commonwealth. Did you play any role in the Republican Party campaign?

Igitol: I'm a Republican, so I had to go with the Republican Party. That was Joeten then, against Carlos Camacho. And I voted for Joeten; we lost.

Willens: What do you think was the issue or issues that led to the defeat of Joeten and Oly Borja?

Igitol: Carlos had the support of the Democrats as a whole, all the Democrats, and a lot of the Republicans respected Carlos for being one of our first doctors here. So a lot of the votes went for Carlos. Joeten was a business person. People didn't see him much out in the public. He was tending to his business only. Unlike Carlos, who was out there in the public eye. They saw him all the time, by the hospital, and talked to him.

Willens: The people elected a Democratic Governor and Lt. Governor, but they also elected a Legislature dominated by the Republicans. What was your experience during the first Administration with this divided government?

Igitol: I think a lot of good came out from that. The Legislature was Republican, and there was a lot of, what do you call this, check and balance. A Republican would come up with some laws, and the Governor did not like it, and they would meet and talk about it and decide what was good and was not good. A lot of times in those days the Republicans would just try to override the Governor. But fortunately the Governor would go along most of the time with the Legislature.

Siemer: You were a Republican, but you went to work for Carlos Camacho as his Director of Procurement.

Igitol: Well, I was also not only working for him then, but during his inauguration I was pretty much active in his inauguration. I was one of the persons in the Committee authorized to walk about on the platform where the President's stand was, and nobody else could go up there, but I was allowed to go up there.

Siemer: Had you known Carlos before the Constitutional Convention?

Igitol: We're cousins. Carlos and I are cousins, and we are friends.

Willens: You had a very long career in government and the private sector here in the Commonwealth. In concluding the interview, can you give us your judgment of how it's all worked out?

Igitol: For me?

Willens: For you and your family and the people.

Igitol: I think we're ahead. My family and I are thankful for all the experiences, and I think we're pretty lucky. We came out okay. Political-wise, people have been asking me, pushing me to run. I have no love lost for not running for political office.

Willens: Well, you did more than your share. Thank you very much for the opportunity to interview you.

Igitol: My pleasure.