

INTERVIEW OF JOSE R. LIFOIFOI

by Howard P. Willens and Deanne C. Siemer

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- Willens: Jose R. Lifoifoi has been a distinguished political leader of the Commonwealth for many years and a close colleague of ours from the Third Northern Marianas Constitutional Convention. Mr. Lifoifoi served in the Commonwealth Legislature for 10 years, and during some of those years was Speaker. He has also had an important role in the private sector in his work with UMDA. Joe, thank you for taking the time on this national holiday to sit with us in your lovely garden and help us on our historical project. Could I begin by asking you when you were born.
- Lifoifoi: I was born on October 26, 1936.
- Willens: Where were you born?
- Lifoifoi: I was born here in Saipan.
- Willens: Could you give us the names of your mother and father.
- Lifoifoi: My father's name is Alfonso Camacho Lifoifoi.
- Willens: And your mother's name?
- Lifoifoi: Adela Selepio Rugueno.
- Willens: How long had your father and his family lived on Saipan?
- Lifoifoi: He was born and raised on Saipan and died here.
- Willens: And your grandfather?
- Lifoifoi: Yes, my grandfather also. My great-grandfather migrated from one of the islands in Chuuk.
- Willens: And how about on your mother's side of the family? Was she also born on Saipan?
- Lifoifoi: Yes, and her father and mother.
- Willens: And did her family also come from Chuuk?
- Lifoifoi: Yes.
- Willens: Did the families know each other going way back to Chuuk days?
- Lifoifoi: No. They came from different islands in Chuuk.
- Willens: Did you have any understanding from your family as to why they migrated to Saipan?
- Lifoifoi: Yes. According to my grandfather, the reason why they migrated was they were looking for a greener pasture.
- Willens: Was there an opportunity for more land here?
- Lifoifoi: Land, but not only that. They had a couple of typhoons. They ran out of food. Taro was all they had. So the men decided to look elsewhere.
- Willens: Would that have been then sometime in the mid-1800s?
- Lifoifoi: Yes.

- Willens: How did they travel from Chuuk to Saipan?
- Lifofoi: By canoe.
- Willens: Was this part of the traditional method of navigation by the stars?
- Lifofoi: Right.
- Willens: Is that the voyage that is commemorated every year as part of the Carolinian practice?
- Lifofoi: Right.
- Willens: How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- Lifofoi: I have four brothers and five sisters, a total of nine.
- Siemer: Can you tell us who they are?
- Lifofoi: Yes. Start out with myself, and Victor, Herman and Bill. That's four boys. And then girls, Grenata, Rosalia, Maria, Inez and Bertha.
- Siemer: Do they all live here in Saipan?
- Lifofoi: Yes. They're all here.
- Siemer: What do your brothers do?
- Lifofoi: My oldest brother, Vic, works for the Department of Labor and Immigration. The second one, Bill, works for Customs. Herman works for the Nikko Hotel as a bus driver. And myself, now retired.
- Willens: Are you the oldest?
- Lifofoi: Yes.
- Willens: Does the oldest son have particular responsibilities in the family?
- Lifofoi: Yes.
- Willens: What are they?
- Lifofoi: The Carolinian custom is now that my father and mother have passed away, it's my obligation to look after my brothers and sisters. When my father was still alive, and I started working for the government, I turn over my paychecks, and in turn my parents pay for my sisters' and brothers' schooling tuition at Mt. Carmel.
- Siemer: What about your sisters? What do they do?
- Lifofoi: My oldest sister retired from government service. The second one is teaching in San Vicente Elementary School. The third sister works for the Supreme Court under Chief Justice Marty Taylor, and the fourth one is a housewife.
- Willens: What did your father do by way of making a living?
- Lifofoi: During the Japanese time, he was just a farmer, fisherman.
- Willens: Where was the family land?
- Lifofoi: Here in Tanapag, but in the upper farm area. During the occupation, we were kicked out, chased out from our village, from our home.
- Willens: From the village of Tanapag?
- Lifofoi: Yes.
- Willens: By the Japanese?

- Lifofoi: Yes.
- Willens: What did they want to do with the property?
- Lifofoi: They occupied our house, turning it into a supplies warehouse. Also the church, which they turned into a warehouse.
- Willens: Did they tell you that they were anticipating an invasion?
- Lifofoi: Yes.
- Willens: But your family had farmland that you could go to?
- Lifofoi: Yes.
- Willens: How many hectares did you have?
- Lifofoi: 13 hectares.
- Willens: Had that been in the family for some time?
- Lifofoi: Yes. It goes way back.
- Willens: How did the Carolinians obtain the title and right to the land when they migrated here?
- Lifofoi: I don't know. But this goes back during German time, when my great-grandfather got the title.
- Willens: We understand the Germans had a homestead program.
- Lifofoi: Yes, I believe so. When they migrated to Saipan, you know Carolinians are basically fishermen, so they all settled down by the beach, while Chamorros are farmers, so they looked for a better soil, I guess.
- Willens: What kind of education do you remember having under the Japanese system?
- Lifofoi: Unfortunately, I didn't go to Japanese school. I was about to go when the war broke out. I was about to start in school. I believe I was registered all ready, and they were sewing my pants. They were preparing me to go to school, and then all of a sudden the war broke out.
- Willens: When you say the war broke out, are you speaking about the actual invasion?
- Lifofoi: Well, the planes started dropping bombs, and all of a sudden the ships appeared on the horizon.
- Willens: Did you personally as a young boy see the ships out there?
- Lifofoi: Yes. I think I was 7, 8 years old.
- Willens: What is your recollection of what your family did when the invasion actually occurred?
- Lifofoi: Well, we just packed up everything we had and moved further back toward the mountain.
- Siemer: How far back did you go.
- Lifofoi: We went close to Marpi but way behind the mountain. My parents knew this area, so they knew the caves.
- Siemer: So they went to the north end of the island and into the caves?
- Lifofoi: Yes, to the caves.
- Willens: How long did you stay there?

- Lifofoi: Three to four months.
- Willens: In the caves?
- Lifofoi: Yes, but we moved from cave to cave. Every day you'd see more bombardment from this area, then at night time my father, grandfather would move us. We'd move again to a different spot.
- Willens: Were you living in the caves with other families?
- Lifofoi: Other families. Other Okinawan families.
- Willens: Were the Okinawans also looking for shelter?
- Lifofoi: Yes. They were all civilians. They were all brought out here I understand to work in the sugarcane fields.
- Siemer: Did anyone in your family speak good Japanese?
- Lifofoi: Yes, my uncles, my father.
- Siemer: Did any of them work for the Japanese Administration?
- Lifofoi: No. But I think the Japanese knew that the war was coming out here, so they drafted all these men and put them to forced labor.
- Siemer: What were they building with the forced labor?
- Lifofoi: Airstrips. They were improving As Lito [airfield]. And they were working day and night.
- Willens: How did you know that it was safe to come out and leave the caves?
- Lifofoi: We didn't know. All of a sudden we saw these Army or Marines right in front of the doors of our caves. So I guess my father ran out. And I think that soldier knows that we're natives, that we're not part of the Japanese.
- Willens: Were some of the Japanese soldiers also hiding in caves?
- Lifofoi: Oh, yes. In fact, my father had a good friend from the Japanese Navy. And at night time, this Japanese was walking all over looking for us to give us these canned goods.
- Willens: To provide food for you?
- Lifofoi: To provide food. And I think he knew that they were going to go start a war.
- Willens: Did the Japanese tell your family that the Americans were a threat to the local community?
- Lifofoi: No. Not our side.
- Willens: What happened after the U.S. soldiers told you it was safe to come out from the caves?
- Lifofoi: Well, he just waved us, signaled us to come out, and then other people took care of us and they moved us to this camp.
- Willens: Which camp was it?
- Lifofoi: Well, from up there pretty soon they began to transport us to Susupe.
- Willens: Were the Carolinian families and the Chamorro families placed in the same section at Camp Susupe?
- Lifofoi: There was one whole camp, but us Carolinians from Tanapag were placed close to what is now the Mt. Carmel Cemetery.

- Willens: You were all placed as a group together?
- Lifofoi: Yes. Now the Carolinians from Chalan Kanoa were placed in that so-called District 4 near what was later Manny Villagomez's, that big store on the beach.
- Willens: Why did they do that?
- Lifofoi: I don't know. That's a good question.
- Siemer: How long did your family stay in the camp?
- Lifofoi: A year, I guess.
- Siemer: When did you start school after the war?
- Lifofoi: Something like 1948, 1949.
- Siemer: By that time, your family had been allowed to come back to their land?
- Lifofoi: Yes. They opened up the gate already, and we started coming back, just to clean up the place, and back to the camp again.
- Siemer: Did any of the Carolinians who lived here in Tanapag have problems establishing that they owned the property?
- Lifofoi: No.
- Willens: Was there a lot of damage to your family property?
- Lifofoi: Yes. There was damage caused by the military occupation. I think they used it to store fuel tanks, the drums.
- Willens: In your home?
- Lifofoi: No, our farm. Our home was in good shape. But they put also this dirt, you know, piled up on the sides, and they'd store these drums.
- Willens: Was Elias Sablan in the camp with you?
- Lifofoi: Yes.
- Willens: Was he elected or designated as a leader among the people?
- Lifofoi: He was just designated by the Naval Administration.
- Willens: Was he Carolinian in part?
- Lifofoi: Yes. I think he's half-caste. I think his mother is Carolinian and his father is Chamorro.
- Willens: Did he have any standing as a leader in one of the Carolinian clans at the time?
- Lifofoi: Right. To the Carolinians from that area, I think he was considered as one of the chiefs.
- Siemer: From down in the Chalan Kanoa area?
- Lifofoi: Chalan Kanoa area.
- Siemer: Who was the leader of the clans that were up here in Tanapag?
- Lifofoi: You know Manny Sablan?
- Willens: I know Manny A. Sablan.
- Lifofoi: Yes. He was on the Political Status Commission?
- Willens: Yes. Was it his father?

- Lifoifoi: His father, Benigno O. Sablan. That O is Olokomar which is Carolinian. And you're getting your title from your mother's side. Not from the father's side. So Benigno was a traditional chief for the Carolinians.
- Willens: For this community here in Tanapag?
- Lifoifoi: Yes. Unfortunately he never stayed here.
- Willens: Where'd he live?
- Lifoifoi: He stayed in Chalan Kanoa with his Chamorro wife. So he kind of just let us go on our own way.
- Willens: When you began school, where did you go to school?
- Lifoifoi: Chalan Kanoa Elementary School. That was the only school in Saipan right after the war. It's now William S. Reyes Elementary.
- Willens: Did you go on to high school?
- Lifoifoi: Yes. But the funny part is that I didn't start from first grade.
- Willens: Where did you start?
- Lifoifoi: I think I started out from sixth, since by eighth I was so old already.
- Willens: Well, you mentioned 1948, so you were about 12 years old.
- Lifoifoi: Right.
- Willens: But you had had no formal schooling at that point.
- Lifoifoi: No.
- Willens: So you started in approximately grade 6?
- Lifoifoi: Yes. I started out A,B,C,D, and all that. Two plus two is four. You know.
- Willens: But they just put you with kids who were your age?
- Lifoifoi: Same age, right. And other kids above us, seven, eight. And then I went from elementary school to Hopwood. But it used to be Chalan Piau Intermediate. Nowadays they call it Hopwood, but it was intermediate. There from I believe from grade seven to nine.
- Willens: And then did you go on to high school?
- Lifoifoi: I went to Guam.
- Willens: Where did you go to school?
- Lifoifoi: George Washington.
- Willens: Do you remember the years that you were in Guam at high school?
- Lifoifoi: 1955. And I had a hard time.
- Willens: You went in 1955?
- Lifoifoi: Yes.
- Willens: And stayed for three years?
- Lifoifoi: Yes.
- Willens: What do you remember about that experience?

- Lifofoi: It was a very unfortunate experience, because when I was in ninth grade, high school in Guam, and I was called upon to define a verb or noun, pronoun, which I'd never heard before. In intermediate, they gave you a book and you'd read. That's how you get your grade, A or B. You know how to read. But now in high school in Guam, we were getting grammar. And I'd never heard of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, all this. And they'd start questioning me, what school did you come from? I'd say Saipan. They'd say you'd better stay after [school].
- Willens: Did they give you some extra training?
- Lifofoi: Yes. And I think that teacher felt sorry for me. I told her I'd never seen this grammar.
- Siemer: Who were you staying with over there while you were going to school?
- Lifofoi: Oh, yes. See immigration was so strict then. We were treated as an alien. Unless you have a sponsor, then you can go to Guam. So Abe Olopai and Frank, there's another Carolinian boy.
- Willens: Frank Palacios?
- Lifofoi: No. He passed away. There's one Carolinian. He's from Chalan Laulau. So I started asking. They came back for summer vacation, and I wanted so much to go outside of Saipan to finish my education. So I asked him to help me out, get me a sponsor. And there was an old Carolinian lady in Guam at that time by the name of Rita Mettao. And she was sponsoring us, the Carolinian boys.
- Willens: How many did she sponsor?
- Lifofoi: Two of us. Me and Frank.
- Willens: Did you both live with her?
- Lifofoi: Yes. But the sad part about it again was that there was no electricity. She had only one son working for Ada's Market, and I guess the salary was very low, so the old lady couldn't afford electricity, no running water.
- Siemer: Where in Guam did she live?
- Lifofoi: Tamuning.
- Willens: Did your family compensate her in any way for helping you in this respect?
- Lifofoi: They sent down fish on the ship. For my father at the time to send me \$20, that's a lot of money, \$20. I think my father was just earning 16 cents an hour.
- Willens: What was he doing at the time?
- Lifofoi: He was working for the government, at Public Works.
- Willens: That would have been the Naval Administration at the time?
- Lifofoi: Right.
- Siemer: How long did you stay in Guam?
- Lifofoi: Four years. I went through high school and then went to the College of Guam.
- Siemer: When did you go to the College of Guam?
- Lifofoi: 1960.
- Siemer: And how long did you stay there?

- Lifofoi: Just one year, or two years rather. I didn't finish. When my father fell off from the truck here and hurt his back and was laid up for eight months, then I had to quit school and come back and take over. I was lucky. I was given 36 cents an hour.
- Siemer: Where were you working then?
- Lifofoi: I started working for Procurement and Supply.
- Siemer: How long did you work there?
- Lifofoi: About a year. Then when there was an opening for a budget technician, budget clerk, I applied for that.
- Siemer: You were a budget technician for which office?
- Lifofoi: The budget office. At the time it was already under the TT government.
- Siemer: Who was the head of that office at the time?
- Lifofoi: Ledana Akimoto. And John Sablan, the late John Sablan, our former High Commissioner.
- Siemer: What year did you start there working at the budget office?
- Lifofoi: 1963, I think.
- Siemer: How long did you stay there?
- Lifofoi: I stayed there for three or four years.
- Siemer: Then what?
- Lifofoi: Then I moved on to the Saipan Credit Bureau.
- Siemer: Was that a private organization?
- Lifofoi: No. It was under CNMI. It was run under the government.
- Siemer: What was your position there?
- Lifofoi: Treasurer. It was Jess Mafnas, and there were a lot of problems.
- Siemer: Jess Mafnas was head of it?
- Lifofoi: Yes. There were a lot of complaints. When you wanted to draw your own share, your own money, you cannot. So Sam Mitchell (Mitchell was the head of the cooperative, who puts these fisheries co-op and credit unions and farmers co-op together), finally came down and talked to me about transferring to the credit bureau to take over. And I transferred.
- Siemer: Where were their offices at that time?
- Lifofoi: In a Quonset hut. And the head of this Economic Development was the late Oly Borja. He was the economic development officer at the time. David Maratita was assistant, and I was the treasurer. And this credit union fell under economic development.
- Willens: Was Frank Ada the District Administrator at that time?
- Lifofoi: Deputy.
- Willens: Then he became District Administrator.
- Lifofoi: Under Pete Coleman. And then later on he became District Administrator.
- Willens: Had you established any political affiliation with one of the two parties by that time?
- Lifofoi: At the time I came back from college, my parents were already in the Territorial Party. I

- had no choice. Olympio Borja, Joeten, Manny Villagomez, old man Elias Sablan, I mean these are the cream of the crop. Should I start questioning my parents why, you know, they chose the Territorial Party? At the start, all the intelligent people are there.
- Willens: The names you've mentioned included most, if not all, the leading business people on the island.
- Lifoifoi: Right.
- Willens: Did the Carolinian community feel some special allegiance to the business people?
- Lifoifoi: No, but I gather this from my parents. My parents looked at the people who during Japanese time worked in the Japanese Administration and all the people who are intelligent, people who went to school during the Japanese time, and that's how they leaned toward this party. And my uncle Peter, Pedro C. Lifoifoi, was also the first village commissioner here.
- Siemer: In Tanapag?
- Lifoifoi: Tanapag. So he knew these people also. He went to the Japanese school. So automatically it's our entire family. And I think the Carolinians went because of Elias Sablan.
- Siemer: Most Carolinians joined the Territorial Party?
- Lifoifoi: Yes.
- Willens: And you think it's primarily because of Elias Sablan?
- Lifoifoi: Right, from that area.
- Willens: What did you understand at the time the Territorial Party wanted to achieve in terms of some future political status?
- Lifoifoi: The Territorial Party wanted to go direct instead of integrating with Guam. This was the issue, and I supported that issue.
- Willens: Why did you favor the Territorial view?
- Lifoifoi: Well, it's like why go to the tail. That was the example which we said. Why go to the tail? Why not go to the head? And having been to high school in Guam and two years of college, I knew Guam had a lot of problems, too. So I said if it's possible, let's go straight to Washington, D.C. Why go to a guy in Guam?
- Willens: What were the kinds of problems you saw in Guam that gave you some concern?
- Lifoifoi: Dirty politics. I would go to these campaigns because of free food, not because I supported the candidate. In those days, they'd serve all kinds of hot meals, you know. And they invited people to come, to attend these Territorial Party and Popular Party meetings in Guam. So a lot of us students would go and not only listen but get something to eat. But then I listen because the vernacular I know all this mud slinging and how stupid this guy is and this guy is sick, you know.
- Willens: Do you think the fact that the Guamanians were Chamorros made it less attractive for you than the Marianas going directly with the U.S.?
- Lifoifoi: No. The issue here then was let's go direct to Washington. Why lean on the tail. So I said yes, if that's possible, yes, why not? I mean we don't want to be governed by Guamanians, you know.
- Willens: Do you remember the plebiscite in 1969 where there were votes in Guam and here as to whether to reunify?

- Lifofoi: Yes. We totally opposed that.
- Willens: Did you campaign against reunification?
- Lifofoi: Yes. Fortunately the campaign lost on Guam, because here, our people just wanted to become [part of the] U.S. regardless of whether it was Guam or direct. I think that's what happened to Guam, too. They don't care whether it's an unincorporated territory or whatever, so long as they become U.S. citizens. They don't care whether they can vote for the President of the United States or not. I think that was also the same position, same thinking of our people, just to become part of the U.S.
- Willens: Why do you think the Guamanians rejected the reunification in 1969?
- Lifofoi: I heard different stories. I think the main reason is that during the Japanese time, some of the Saipanese were sent down as interpreters, as a policemen with the Japanese.
- Siemer: Sent to Guam to assist the Japanese?
- Lifofoi: Working in Guam with the Japanese and beating up the Guamanians and all that.
- Siemer: There was a lot of forced labor on Guam back in the Japanese time, wasn't there?
- Lifofoi: Yes. The Chamorros were used for that. They brought them down to Guam to be a translator, and at the same time they turn against the Guamanians. So I believe that was the reason.
- Willens: Did you give any consideration during the 1960s to running for office yourself?
- Lifofoi: No.
- Willens: When did you first run for political office?
- Lifofoi: 1977.
- Willens: And that would have been for the first Commonwealth Legislature?
- Lifofoi: Yes.
- Siemer: You ran for the first Constitutional Convention, didn't you?
- Lifofoi: No. I was so busy trying to get up this ladder in the TT headquarters.
- Siemer: How long did you stay at the credit union?
- Lifofoi: I stayed about three or four years.
- Siemer: Then where did you go after that?
- Lifofoi: I went to the first housing authority, the Northern Marianas Housing Authority, when they first opened.
- Siemer: What job did you have there?
- Lifofoi: As a credit analyst. And among all the applicants, I was chosen by SBA, Small Business Administration, from Honolulu. And the salary now was \$1.35 an hour. They call that C-1. That's professional level. And that's \$108 every ten days. That was great to get \$108 every two weeks.
- Siemer: How long did you stay there?
- Lifofoi: I stayed there for maybe five years.
- Siemer: Then you ran for the Legislature?
- Lifofoi: No. I was transferred to headquarters again, back up to headquarters.

- Siemer: TT Headquarters?
- Lifofoi: Yes. For now C-2, more salary.
- Siemer: What was your job there?
- Lifofoi: Very funny. It was housing officer. Just to assign people to these houses.
- Siemer: Oh, you assigned people into all the government housing here?
- Lifofoi: Yes.
- Siemer: You must have been a very popular person.
- Lifofoi: Yes. So I never thought about political office, you know.
- Willens: When you began in the 1960s working in the Trust Territory government, what was your view at the time about the capability of the people that worked in the Trust Territory Administration?
- Lifofoi: Oh, at the time I thought that they were the smartest people in this world. They were brought out from Washington, D.C.
- Willens: What did you come to think as you grew older and more experienced?
- Lifofoi: Some of them, to me, they're the best. Some of them were just phonies. Of course I'm not an education man, so I don't know about the directors of education or public health, but as far as finance, people came out from the Bureau of Reclamation and all that, and they're supposed to be good.
- Siemer: Were the finance people any good?
- Lifofoi: Oh, yes.
- Willens: Did you feel there were opportunities for you and other Micronesians to be promoted within the TTPI government?
- Lifofoi: Yes. They started that program, intern management program, where eventually you're going to take over the top jobs.
- Siemer: Did that work?
- Lifofoi: Yes. It worked. I mean to me now, that was the best in that TT government. Comparing to this government now. I mean everything now is politics. Whether or not the guy is qualified, they just put him in, because the whole family voted for the governor, you know. But during the TT, when there is a position vacant or promotion, they announced it Trust Territory-wide.
- Siemer: So everybody could apply?
- Lifofoi: Everybody from Kosrae to here, with Masters degrees or whatever qualifications.
- Willens: So you thought that was the best—appointment based on merit?
- Lifofoi: Merit, right.
- Willens: One of the issues then was equal pay for equal work. Did you have any sense at the time that the dual pay scale was unfair?
- Lifofoi: No. I remember this Palauan guy who filed suit against the federal government about equal pay. But at that time, I thought that my experience and my education was not equal to whoever my supervisor was. That was my feeling.
- Willens: So you did not agree with the lawsuit?

- Lifofoi: No. I thought if I had a Bachelors degree or Masters, you know, with experience, maybe I could say that I'm better off than this guy in the U.S. Civil Service, you know. But with my limited education and no experience, I didn't think so.
- Siemer: Who was the High Commissioner when you started with the TT government?
- Lifofoi: Edward Johnston.
- Willens: What was your assessment of him?
- Lifofoi: He seemed good. But of course, I'm just way down there.
- Willens: But you came back to Saipan in 1962 or 1963?
- Lifofoi: 1963.
- Willens: So the High Commissioner then would have been Goding.
- Lifofoi: It was Goding.
- Willens: And then it became Norwood and then Johnston.
- Lifofoi: Right. But during my time in the TT, I remember Johnston very well.
- Willens: Did you see any change in TTPI policy in the 1960s in terms of more funding or more opportunities?
- Lifofoi: Yes. The way I saw it was in the term of the president, the next president. During Kennedy's time, we were only getting \$17.5 million for the entire TT. Then when Kennedy was assassinated, it went up to \$22. And it continued to grow up to \$35, up to \$50.
- Willens: What was the money being spent for, as you saw it?
- Lifofoi: Mostly infrastructure throughout the TT, from Yap to Palau, Chuuk, Ponape, Kosrae, the Marshalls.
- Siemer: Had you traveled much to the other districts back in those days, in the 1960s?
- Lifofoi: No, because the headquarters were here. People came from many districts to attend conferences, meetings, or training, you know.
- Siemer: When did you have a chance to start traveling to the other districts?
- Lifofoi: During TT, I was appointed to be a member of the Health Planning Council. So that took me to Ponape for an organization meeting.
- Willens: I gather from what you've said that you worked with Oly Borja for several years?
- Lifofoi: Yes.
- Willens: And at the time, was he a member of the Congress of Micronesia?
- Lifofoi: No. When he became a member of the Congress of Micronesia, I was back at headquarters of the TT government.
- Willens: What was your evaluation of Oly Borja as a politician?
- Lifofoi: As a politician? Well, I would say Oly was a good man. He always tried his best to fulfill his promises, but later on I found out he cannot promise. He could not promise, and no one can promise.
- Willens: Well, some people comment on the fact that he moved from the Territorial Party to the Popular Party and then back to the Republican Party in 1977.
- Lifofoi: That's right.

- Willens: What do you think caused him to change his party affiliation?
- Lifofoi: I don't know. My own opinion was Oly was so desperate because he wanted to be in elected office.
- Siemer: So he switched because the tide was going to the other party?
- Lifofoi: Yes. See, during all these days during TT government, we had a 16-member District Legislature. It's only part-time. So between the Popular Party and the Territorial Party it was always hard fought. We would drum up the candidates for the Territorial Party, and the Popular Party would come up with theirs. Then we'd always get slaughtered.
- Siemer: Why was that?
- Lifofoi: Remember when this party was formed, I told you all the businessmen and all the intelligent people in Saipan went for Territorial. Now there's Ben Santos, Danny Muna, Dr. Palacios, in the Popular Party. They said, "Our party is for the poor people," and it's very effective. They said "Where are the poor people here [in the Territorial Party]? Those people are the richest." And people took that very seriously. They believed those politicians. So I guess it's gone on for almost 10, 15 years, we're slaughtered every time. I used to campaign, and we had all the best candidates every election. Pete P., Larry Guerrero, all of us, all were slaughtered for many, many years.
- Siemer: But then in 1972 you started to win, didn't you?
- Lifofoi: It started to turn, the tide started to turn.
- Siemer: What caused it to start to turn around?
- Lifofoi: Oh, on these political status issues. We've been saying that all along that it's better to go to Washington direct, to become U.S. citizens, not to go with Guam.
- Willens: Who were the leaders of the Popular Party that you knew the best?
- Lifofoi: Ben Santos. Joe Cruz. the late Joe Cruz.
- Willens: Can you give us any personal recollections about Joe Cruz as a person and a politician?
- Lifofoi: I didn't like Joe. He was a dirty politician. He'd do anything to get into office. He'd stand up campaigning and he'd mud sling, you know. And he'd make up stories. And people liked that, in those days. They liked to listen to the dirty linen.
- Siemer: They like to listen to good speakers and fiery orations?
- Lifofoi: Yes, and that's Joe.
- Willens: Did the Territorial Party have any supporters over on Tinian?
- Lifofoi: Very few. Fleming, the businessman. And on Rota, the Manglonas. They were also businessmen.
- Willens: Do you know how the Territorial Party on Rota got started?
- Lifofoi: I guess through Joeten, those people who started out this party. Olympio [Borja], Elias Sablan.
- Siemer: Were you still working at TT headquarters when you ran in 1977?
- Lifofoi: Yes.
- Siemer: How long did you stay with TT? To the end?
- Lifofoi: No. When I won that election in 1977, I tendered my resignation.

- Siemer: Then how long were you in the Legislature?
- Lifoifoi: Ten years.
- Siemer: When did you become Speaker?
- Lifoifoi: 1986, 1987.
- Siemer: When did you leave the Legislature?
- Lifoifoi: 1988. That was my last term.
- Siemer: What did you do after that?
- Lifoifoi: Larry Hillblom invited me to join UMDA, and I went there.
- Siemer: So that's when you became a director of UMDA?
- Lifoifoi: Yes. And I said well, Larry, I don't know anything. I know nothing about business. I'm not an engineer. I'm not a lawyer. He said, "No, that's okay."
- Siemer: Well you'd worked in finance for a long time.
- Lifoifoi: Yes, but in finance, it's funny, because there's so many accounts and all this [is kept separate]. They give you one book just to keep track of the copra. This the Copra Board. So all you know is that copra, and that ledger was about copra. Then another fellow is controlling the elementary education, only elementary education. And so on.
- Willens: Did you have a specialty?
- Lifoifoi: Well, at the credit union, I'm the accountant and I'm the credit analyst.
- Willens: You were everything.
- Lifoifoi: Yes. I am the loan officer. I'm the interviewer. Yes, but at headquarters, no. You can never become that. It's so huge. The organization was so big.
- Willens: The Congress of Micronesia's Committee on Political Status issued a report in 1969 favoring something called free association with the United States and, in case that didn't work out, they favored independence. The whole thrust of the report was to try to keep all the six districts of Micronesia together. What was your view as to whether it was possible or desirable to keep all six districts together?
- Lifoifoi: I knew then that it would be impossible.
- Willens: Why was that?
- Lifoifoi: I knew Kabua's thinking was to get all these military [activities] in Kwajalein, and that's where he's going to get all his revenue. I knew it all along.
- Siemer: And they'd try to keep that revenue there.
- Lifoifoi: Right, instead of sharing it with people in Saipan or Chuuk or Ponape.
- Siemer: You'd met Kabua here in Saipan?
- Lifoifoi: Yes. I used to entertain those people here.
- Willens: What kind of a man was he?
- Lifoifoi: Kabua? Kabua was for himself, not for his people.
- Siemer: He seemed to have fairly strong political support there, though.
- Lifoifoi: Yes, because he was a traditional chief. He was a king.

- Willens: When you would sit down with Mr. Kabua and others here in an informal setting, did you hear from them that they wanted to go off their own separate ways, or did they talk about all of Micronesia staying together?
- Lifofoi: Kabua never mentioned that. He was one of the political leaders. In fact, he was a member of the Future Political Status Commission. But his Congressman in the House of Representatives when they drink at Hamilton, they'd say you know I don't think this is going to work out. And our leadership here, they didn't think we could get a fair share. They were looking at there being 35,000 population here on Saipan and if we split up this [Micronesia-wide] budget, this pie, we would get a smaller portion of this pie. So why don't we continue our aspiration to become full-fledged U.S. citizens. At the time we didn't know about commonwealth, so they started looking into the alternatives, the members of the Political Status Commission.
- Willens: Dr. Palacios, when he was in the Congress of Micronesia, occasionally would speak out in favor of Micronesia staying together, and there was some sense that the Carolinian community or a portion of it, thought that trying to maintain ties with their ancestral homes was a good thing. What did you think about that?
- Lifofoi: At the time I said no, we should separate from the others.
- Willens: Did you feel that the Carolinians on Saipan were prepared to cast in their future with the Chamorros here, even though the Chamorros were a majority?
- Lifofoi: Yes. You know Carolinian people are good listeners. They listen to their leadership. And once you convince them that it's better to go this way, then that's it. Unlike Chamorros.
- Willens: Chamorros are not listeners?
- Lifofoi: No. They are a lot of scientists. You tell them this and that, they say yes, but then they go back there and they keep questioning. Generally, Carolinians listen to their leadership.
- Willens: Were you involved in the formation of the United Carolinian Association?
- Lifofoi: UCA. Right.
- Willens: What caused that to be formed?
- Lifofoi: We wanted Carolinians to unite strongly as far as politics, so that the Chamorros, the majority, would respect the Carolinians. We wanted respect. When this thing becomes like the Commonwealth, we wanted, whether the Governor or this political party, to recognize this group and [we wanted Carolinians to] be put in positions, decision-making positions.
- Siemer: When was the United Carolinian Association formed approximately?
- Lifofoi: It was before the first election in 1977, so I would say in 1973 or 1974.
- Willens: The Marianas Political Status Commission was formed in 1972, and there was a spot designated for a representative of the Carolinian community. Felix Rebauliman was designated to serve. Was he appointed by the Association or through some other means, if you remember?
- Lifofoi: No, the Association appointed Felix, we recommended Felix, we put the name in, we submitted the name to the District Legislature.
- Willens: Did you know Felix well?
- Lifofoi: Yes, I would say. I campaigned hard for Felix to represent us in the Congress of Micronesia.

- Siemer: Is Felix's family from this part of the island, from Tanapag?
- Lifoifoi: No, from Oleai. In fact when they appointed Felix, when they asked for one representative, we thought we were looking for two or three representatives. So basically that's how we got together with Dr. Kaipat and Joe Taitano and Ben Fitial. We formed this United Carolinian Association.
- Willens: You formed UCA then?
- Lifoifoi: Yes.
- Willens: During the two years or more that Felix served on the Marianas Political Status Commission, did he report to the Association or the clans in some regular way?
- Lifoifoi: Yes, he reported to us.
- Willens: How did he do that?
- Lifoifoi: After meetings with the U.S. delegation or whatever, then he'd come back. We'd call a UCA meeting. And this Association was just sort of all the leaders from the Carolinian sector, all the families. Then he would report what transpired in that meeting. So we asked for his advice, and he gave us options.
- Willens: Were there any particular issues that you can remember that Felix brought back to you for discussion?
- Lifoifoi: Well, when the Covenant was near completion, when they were about to sign, then he came back. He said, "You know, it's not very clear. The Covenant is not totally clear." So we said, "Well what can we do?" He said, "Well, I leave it up to you." So we said, "Well let's go oppose it." The way Felix explained it, there was no draft for a long time. We want to see a draft. [We were concerned] because we haven't seen a draft. They kept the draft away from us. During all these political meetings, a lot of questions were raised but they were not answered. The Peace Corps lawyer who was helping us was fired by Williams.
- Willens: Who was that?
- Lifoifoi: I forgot his name, but he was stationed in District 4, the Carolinian side. I can get that name. And he asked a lot of questions on our behalf. The next day, the Peace Corps came up and sent him off.
- Willens: Was he working on this island or back in the Carolines?
- Lifoifoi: Saipan. After that, all the Peace Corps lawyers, moved.
- Siemer: How did the Carolinians feel back in those days about this discussion between a U.S. delegation and a Marianas delegation? Did they think that the Marianas delegation was out-gunned or out-performed by the U.S.?
- Lifoifoi: Yes, I would say that they were out-performed.
- Siemer: Were they worried about the ability of the Commission to deal with all of this U.S. power?
- Lifoifoi: Well, our concern in those days was what would happen to our salaries. Would they be the same as U.S.? If there is a guarantee that we become U.S. citizens and our salary becomes \$4.25 minimum wage applying the U.S. standard?
- Willens: That would have been a good thing.
- Lifoifoi: Yes, and who's going to fund this? I mean are we going to tax ourselves, or is there going to be help from the U.S.?

- Siemer: Were you worried about the funding level under the Covenant?
- Lifofoi: That was our concern.
- Siemer: Did Ambassador Williams ever come and meet with the United Carolinian Association?
- Lifofoi: Yes, once.
- Siemer: What did you think of him?
- Lifofoi: He knew his business. I think he was intelligent.
- Siemer: How about any of the other members of the U.S. delegation? Did any of them seek out Carolinians to find out what you thought or how you thought about these issues?
- Lifofoi: Sometimes Dr. Palacios, because he's also partly Carolinian, you know.
- Willens: Did you regard him at the time as being a leader in the Carolinian community?
- Lifofoi: Oh, yes.
- Willens: Did he have some tribal chief status?
- Lifofoi: Yes, that's right, and our protector. We leaned toward him also for advice.
- Willens: When I interviewed Felix, he recalled as you do that there were many concerns in the Carolinian community about the Covenant. Then the question was, was he directed not to sign the Covenant, or did he make that decision on his own in light of what he heard from you and others in the Carolinian community?
- Lifofoi: I believe we put a pressure on Felix not to sign the document. Our position then was to give us the document, and we'll hire a professor from Australia, not from the U.S. Because I was getting also advice from like Tosiwo Nakayama, you know. But you want an impartial person. Get a professor from the University of Australia but not Washington.
- Siemer: And go over the whole thing?
- Lifofoi: Go over and explain to them basically what [is in the document] because these are political terms and at the time we were not exposed to these words.
- Willens: How did you happen to know Nakayama?
- Lifofoi: Oh, we came from the same island, my grandparents. So we could converse. We could talk in that Carolinian [dialect]. That was part of the reason why I entertained the leaders in Micronesia, because my wife had become secretary to Bethwel Henry [from Ponape]. She jumped from the Executive Officer of the TT government to work for the House of Representatives.
- Willens: Was he the Speaker? Bethwel Henry?
- Lifofoi: Right.
- Willens: I see. So was Nakayama a Senator?
- Lifofoi: He was President of the Senate.
- Willens: So he was one of those who would come to your house from time to time?
- Lifofoi: Oh, yes. Then we'd drink and we'd talk politics and all that.
- Willens: Was he strongly opposed to the Marianas going off on its separate way?
- Lifofoi: Yes. We discussed that. I told Tos [Nakayama] that even Carolinians would never go back to Truk.

- Willens: The Carolinians from Saipan?
- Lifofoi: Saipan. We would never go back the way we used to live or go back to your style, your culture, you know.
- Willens: What did he say when he heard that from you?
- Lifofoi: Well, he said, "That's very sad, you know." I said Tos, "This is a fact of life now. I mean we're better off here, I think, than 15,000 of your people down there. And we're looking toward a better life. And this will guarantee us by becoming U.S. citizens. It will guarantee our funding, being a part of the family of the U.S. Now to become independent, we have no resources here. We have no oil, we have no lumber, nothing, so how are we going to get money?"
- Willens: Did he think that the Ponape, Truk and what are now the Federated States could survive as an independent country?
- Lifofoi: Yes.
- Siemer: How?
- Lifofoi: Their main concern was that nobody was going to tell you what to do on your own island. You want to sleep, you sleep. But when Washington says don't sleep until 8:00 tonight, I'd say no, I'm going to sleep now. But it's basically foreign affairs. He said, you know, we control our own. As far as funding, he was not concerned about it.
- Willens: Did he think he would get the necessary funding from the U.S.?
- Lifofoi: No, but people must learn how to survive, you know.
- Siemer: And pay taxes?
- Lifofoi: I don't know now. I'd like to see Tos [Nakayama] and sit down again and go over it. But that same thinking was shared by Lazarus Salii, the late Lazarus Salii, and [Amata] Kabua, and Andon Amaraich, and Senator [Petrus] Tun and John Mangefel.
- Willens: They were all on the Future Status Commission, all the people you just named.
- Lifofoi: Yes. And we'd sit down and we'd drink and talk about it. For them, it's not the funding. Whether they get \$15 million or a billion, it's not important. But nobody can tell them what to do on their own island.
- Siemer: And they wanted to conduct their own foreign affairs?
- Lifofoi: Yes.
- Willens: Did you think that Lazarus Salii was hopeful that the Marianas and the Marshalls and the other districts could all stay together?
- Lifofoi: He was hopeful. But you know he conducted a public hearing and he invited only the Carolinian leadership.
- Willens: Was that during the time that he was the Chairman of the Joint Committee?
- Lifofoi: Yes.
- Willens: His committee did conduct hearings in 1973 here in the Northern Marianas. Do you remember meeting with his committee?
- Lifofoi: Yes.
- Willens: What did the Carolinian representatives say to him?

- Lifofoi: Well, we told Chairman Salii that under this Compact, so-called Compact, that we don't see where's funding coming to us, not to mention that we're the minority here in Saipan, but as the Northern Marianas.
- Willens: The Northern Marianas would be a minority within the larger Micronesia?
- Lifofoi: Yes, and you cannot give us exact figures, so we were worried about our future here. But we thought if we went our separate ways, then we got \$17 million or \$50 million guaranteed, Carolinians would have a share in that through positions, work, employment and all that. And food stamps, of course.
- Willens: What did he say to that?
- Lifofoi: Well, that he cannot help it, I mean. But I said as for the Carolinians out there, and we know our people, basically they are lazy people, the Carolinians. So what we are being offered, these food stamps and all of this, this is very good for our people. People that cannot work, of course, they would be guaranteed [support] under this program. Hopefully those strong Carolinians will go out there and work and get a job.
- Siemer: There were a lot of Carolinians in private enterprise back in those days, weren't there?
- Lifofoi: Yes.
- Willens: Was Oscar Rasa someone who was regarded favorably in the Carolinian community?
- Lifofoi: Yes, at the time, for not signing the Covenant.
- Willens: Was Oscar an effective politician?
- Lifofoi: Yes. Oscar was a great speaker. He was a great liar, too. And people believed him, because he went to college, and he was a smart person. But I know for a fact he was a liar, and I didn't trust Oscar from the very beginning when I met him. He could confuse the issue, you know. And you wouldn't know [what was really the case], because you're not part of that. He'd never read the Covenant to the people, but he could confuse a lot of people.
- Siemer: But he was a good campaigner?
- Lifofoi: He was a good campaigner, good speaker.
- Willens: He was one of those who led the effort to vote no on the Covenant before the plebiscite.
- Lifofoi: Right.
- Willens: Did you take any position during that political campaign?
- Lifofoi: Yes. We took the position not to sign the document, you know, until we had all looked at it and the explanation was very clear. Somebody had to explain it totally, page by page, so we would know what we were getting into. No one would come forward, so we took the position that we would just vote no on the Covenant. Hopefully it wouldn't go through, then we'd have a second draft to renegotiate and find out more.
- Siemer: Did you think that was a realistic possibility that if the vote was no, you'd have a chance to renegotiate with the United States?
- Lifofoi: Yes, at the time. We were thinking then by that time Ambassador Williams would come down and say. "Well what's your problem?"
- Siemer: And address the specific Carolinian problems?
- Lifofoi: Yes. And explain to us word by word.

- Willens: Did any members of the U.S. delegation or from Erwin Canham's office sit down with you and other Carolinians and try to do that?
- Lifofoi: No.
- Willens: Were some of the Carolinian leaders in disagreement with that position? Did some of them favor the Covenant?
- Lifofoi: The leadership agreed that Felix should not sign the Covenant, should not be part of that Covenant. Well, I don't know about the grassroots at the time. But we took the position that on this, if the Carolinian leadership knew thoroughly what the Covenant was all about, then we can go back to our people and say this is a good document. But at that time, it was like we were blind. We don't know what to tell our people.
- Willens: Were you surprised by the outcome?
- Lifofoi: Well, no, I wasn't surprised. The majority of the people wanted to become U.S. citizens. I guess all of us, I mean 100%, wanted to become part of the U.S. Except a few of us were not thoroughly in favor, but, well, we didn't know the document.
- Siemer: At one point during the political education campaign before the vote, the Carolinians questioned the language of the ballot. Apparently the Carolinian community was concerned about how the no option was phrased. Do you remember that?
- Lifofoi: I remember that, but I was not concerned about that.
- Siemer: The Covenant was approved here.
- Lifofoi: With 78%, right?
- Siemer: Yes. Did any Carolinians go to Washington to lobby the Congress?
- Lifofoi: No. That was that. That issue was dead right there. And we tried our best to bring us into the mainstream.
- Siemer: The next thing that happened was the District Legislature began to consider how to set up the first Constitutional Convention. One of the things that caused a lot of difficulty was how to ensure that Carolinians were represented in the First Constitutional Convention. Was there a concern in the Carolinian community that if the Constitutional Convention delegates were elected island-wide, that no Carolinians would be elected?
- Lifofoi: Yes. I remember that was a concern.
- Siemer: Why was that? You had some very good politicians who were always elected back then.
- Lifofoi: We were just worried that at-large, Chamorros would not support Carolinian candidates. Me, personally, it didn't bother me. I went back to TT and continued to work, and it didn't bother me about the Constitutional Convention because I knew that whoever became our delegates, they will write this Constitution to the best of their ability, to take care of the people of the Commonwealth, not only Chamorros.
- Siemer: When the Carolinian Constitutional Convention candidates were selected, one of them was Ben Fitial, who was very young at the time. How did someone who was that young get accepted in the community as a delegate?
- Lifofoi: Well, in the Carolinian community there are very few of us—only in the ten fingers you can count—Carolinian boys who went to school abroad. Very few, and Ben was one.
- Siemer: He was very smart, as well.
- Lifofoi: Yes. I think Felix was, also, in the Constitutional Convention.

- Siemer: It was Luis Limes.
- Lifofoi: Oh, no, Luis, I'm sorry.
- Siemer: And Pete Igitol.
- Lifofoi: Right. So during the Constitutional Convention, I was working, and all of a sudden Felix came and he said, "We've got to do something." [I said,] "What?" He said, "I guess the Constitution is being formed, and they want to leave us out."
- Siemer: What did Felix want to do?
- Lifofoi: Well, that's when this Carolinian Affairs came about, the Office of Carolinian Affairs. This was where we started discussing that issue, in my garage. And I said, "I don't know whether this can go through, you know, to have only one special office for Carolinians, no Chamorros. I don't know how they're going to react to this, but let's try it."
- Siemer: What was your idea about what the Office would do?
- Lifofoi: To take care of Carolinians, to function as an office between the Carolinian community and the Governor's Office. Look, Governor, our people are not being attended to as far as employment.
- Siemer: This is what we need.
- Lifofoi: Yes. This was our thinking.
- Siemer: How do you think that Office has worked out?
- Lifofoi: Well, it hasn't functioned as it's supposed to.
- Siemer: Why not?
- Lifofoi: I don't know.
- Siemer: Is it the people who are appointed?
- Lifofoi: It became politics. I knew from the first, 1978, Felix was the first Carolinian Affairs Officer, and I knew there were a lot of requests from Carolinian sectors as far as positions. As far as our road, it's never been fixed, yet our neighbors seem to get better treatment.
- Siemer: In Tanapag?
- Lifofoi: No, basically those in San Jose and District 4.
- Siemer: Well Felix was Republican, wasn't he?
- Lifofoi: Yes.
- Siemer: And the first Governor was a Democrat?
- Lifofoi: I'm sorry, this is under Pete P. Tenorio. The Carolinians were disappointed with Felix.
- Willens: Did the Carolinians support the Territorial Party candidates for Governor and Lt. Governor in the first election, the 1977 election?
- Lifofoi: Yes. Joeten.
- Willens: You mentioned earlier the issue of rich people vs. poor people. Was that an important issue?
- Lifofoi: Yes.
- Willens: That was THE issue?

- Lifofoi: Yes, that was THE issue. Here's a millionaire versus poor. And what more, if this guy take over this government, he's going to clean up.
- Siemer: In his business affairs?
- Lifofoi: Right.
- Siemer: What did you think of that argument?
- Lifofoi: No. Joeten, you know, I mean he's ready to retire from all his businesses. He just wants to contribute his time to a better government; that was his idea.
- Siemer: One of the issues in the Constitutional Convention was districting for elections for the first Legislature. Do you recall discussions about how that districting ought to go in order to assure that Carolinians could get elected?
- Lifofoi: Yes. When they drew that boundary, I said it was fair enough because they [the Carolinians] now are moving from Chalan Kanoa District 4, and they are established in San Jose, Oleai and Garapan and Tanapag. So when I saw that line, that boundary for Tanapag and then here's Garapan and Oliai, that's a lot of Carolinians. And then I said yes, that's fair.
- Siemer: You had decided to ask for an Office of Carolinian Affairs?
- Lifofoi: And then we got it, you know. There was a lot of discussion in the Constitutional Convention, the community and all that.
- Siemer: There was a lot of discussion.
- Lifofoi: I know. But then I went up and spoke to a few members and said, "Look, we're a small minority. Our people are very worried about our future, so why don't you just give us this one office?"
- Siemer: There was a letter that was sent to the Constitutional Convention from Felicidad Ogumuro about this Carolinian Affairs Office demanding that the Constitutional Convention do this for the Carolinian community. It was sent as a spokesperson for the Carolinian community. Why did that letter come from Felicidad?
- Lifofoi: I didn't know that, you know. But that would be from her husband, Cisco. Remember Cisco?
- Siemer: Yes.
- Lifofoi: Because Cisco once in a while he came also and listened to our discussion. But we never sent out an official letter from the leadership. Instead we went down and lobbied for that office.
- Siemer: Lobbied the Chamorro delegates from Saipan?
- Lifofoi: Yes. We'd call Luis, Ben and Pete, and we'd say this is our position, the Carolinian position, so we have to work hard, and we'll try to help, talking to our friends in the delegates.
- Siemer: Who else besides you and Felix went to lobby?
- Lifofoi: Me, Felix and I think it was Joe Taitano. I guess there were three of us. Cisco would go to, but we didn't listen to him. He was trying to cause more trouble—no, we should ask for more, put in a funding guarantee. [We said,] "No, no, no, Cisco. This one is enough. This will take care of us."
- Willens: Did you have any views in 1977 about foreign investment in the Northern Marianas, whether it was a desirable objective?

- Lifofoi: No. I never dreamed that I would run for this office in Precinct 4. I was doing okay in my job, and my wife was doing all right, and we thought leave this to politicians.
- Willens: How did it come about that you were selected?
- Lifofoi: All the people here in the village, they called a meeting one time, and they asked for my presence. They said, "Look, we want somebody to represent us in that Congress, and we want you." I said, "Well, I have no background, I don't know anything about this." So they said, "We want somebody who is honest enough, to represent us." And San Roque had a very small population, so Garapan was calling the shots for this precinct. Kagman was not in existence. So it was Garapan. So I said, "Well, I will try."
- Willens: The first Legislature was overwhelming Republican, wasn't it?
- Lifofoi: Yes, that's right.
- Willens: What was the result of having a Republican Legislature and having a Democratic Governor?
- Lifofoi: Well, it was chaos.
- Willens: Did Frank Ada as Lt. Governor play an active role in helping run the government?
- Lifofoi: No, we were so disappointed, you know.
- Willens: How so?
- Lifofoi: Disappointed in Frank. Because Frank is the man that knows really about the Northern Marianas, being a former District Administrator and all that.
- Siemer: He had a lot of government experience.
- Lifofoi: Right. He graduated from the University of Hawaii in Political Science, you know. I respected the guy. But then he had no chance, I guess. Camacho didn't give him the chance to speak or even to—just like I'm looking at between Froilan and Jesse. I mean, Jesse being a lawyer, he should know about all these legal issues. I said look, give it to Jesse on all these issues, as far as legal issues, but I'm surprised that this poor Jesse doesn't get anything to do.
- Willens: Just one last question. One of the last compromises made with respect to the Covenant was to guarantee a bicameral Legislature in which the three islands would have an equal voice in the Senate. Based on your years of service in the Legislature, how do you think that has worked out?
- Lifofoi: I would object to that now. During our days when I was still in there, we had no problem. We sat down with Benjamin and Julian Calvo.
- Siemer: When you were in the Legislature?
- Lifofoi: Yes. No problem. We said you get only \$1 million. The fact that you have a small population and the fact that what you are contributing to the pot, you know, so we should get more. That worked in those days. Now it's a big problem when they walk out from the Senate side.
- Willens: Do you have any thoughts you want to share with us about how you think the Commonwealth has worked over the last 20 years?
- Lifofoi: It's working very well. My personal opinion is that we're so fortunate that we became Commonwealth. Look at Guam. They're having problems trying to attain the same status. We're so fortunate, we're so blessed, and it's working out very well. If for some reason

something fails here, I blame our government, our administration, but not Washington. But as far as being a Commonwealth, we're blessed and very happy.

Willens: Thank you very much, sir.

Lifofoi: Thank you very much.