

INTERVIEW OF PRUDENCIO T. MANGLONA

by Howard P. Willens and Deanne C. Siemer

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- Willens: Prudencio T. Manglona is a colleague from the First Constitutional Convention, a long-serving Mayor of Rota, and someone we have known and respected for many, many years. Prudencio, thank you very much for being available and willing to help with our project. Could we begin by getting some background information?
- Manglona: Thank you Howard and Deanne. I wish to welcome you both to the beautiful island of Rota. I am pleased that you are interested to review the past condition of the island, especially in the area of the economic development. It's almost 20 years after you left the Marianas Islands and I know that through visiting all the islands you see the difference. I enjoyed my membership in the First Constitutional Convention and it worked satisfactorily. Up to this moment there is some problem, but I believe the second and third Constitutional Conventions tried their best to deal with that. My name is Prudencio Taisacan Manglona. I lived in Rota all my life except for the years when I went to school in Saipan and Guam. I left the island in 1947 to study in Saipan at elementary school for two years. Because of my age at that time, they gave me an examination to place me. After the war in 1945, there was no U.S. educational system on the island. They evaluated my intellectual ability and they placed me in the sixth grade. After I attended one year in Saipan, I moved to Guam and I studied there for the 7th and 8th grades. After that, I enrolled at the George Washington high school for four years and I got my high school diploma.
- Willens: When did you graduate from high school?
- Manglona: In 1956. From 1956 I worked for the Trust Territory government. I started here [in Rota] from 1956 to 1959. From 1959, I was classified as an administrative assistant. There was an opportunity for me in the High Commissioner's office and, at that time, Rota has nobody to represent the unfortunate people who have gripes so they asked me to go to Truk Island in 1957 to study about basic laws to represent people who are in violation of the law, to act as public defender.
- Willens: In 1957 you went to Truk?
- Manglona: Yes and I studied for three months.
- Willens: That's when you were working for the TTPI as an administrative assistant?
- Manglona: Yes.
- Willens: When were you born?
- Manglona: I was born in May 27, 1934.
- Willens: Who was your father?
- Manglona: My father is Prudencio Mendiola Manglona.
- Siemer: And your mother?
- Manglona: Maria Taisacan Manglona.
- Siemer: Were both of your parents born here in Rota?

- Manglona: Yes.
- Siemer: How far back does your family go here in Rota?
- Manglona: Well, my father now is 94 years old and my mother is 92. Still living.
- Siemer: And were their parents born here in Rota as well?
- Manglona: Yes. They're both born in Rota.
- Siemer: Do you have family members in Guam?
- Manglona: We have relatives there. A lot of people moved in the 1950's and 1960's for economic opportunity or employment opportunity, so I know I have second cousins who are staying in Guam.
- Siemer: How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- Manglona: I believe I've got 12 in the family but only three survived because the health conditions were very poor during the Japanese time. There is no good health center facility. By birth my mother lost kids and during the war also when my mother delivered a baby, they would lose the baby.
- Willens: Was there no hospital on the island?
- Manglona: We have an infirmary. Any major type of problem have would be referred to Saipan and, at that time, transportation was very rare, mostly monthly. So you end up losing your member of the family.
- Siemer: Who are the surviving brothers and sisters?
- Manglona: Well, let me see. I believe I've got eight brothers and four sisters, but I lost all my sisters and there are only three brothers surviving. My oldest brother, that survived, is Antonio Taisacan Manglona, then there is Benjamin Taisacan Manglona, and myself.
- Siemer: Does Antonio live here on Rota?
- Manglona: Yes except for 1959 to I think 1972 when he came back to Rota. He is now living in Rota.
- Siemer: What is your wife's name?
- Manglona: Bernadita Atalig Manglona.
- Siemer: And how many children do you have?
- Manglona: I have 10 children and I lost three early.
- Siemer: Can you identify those who survived?
- Manglona: The oldest one is Vincent A. Manglona, Paul A. Manglona, John A. Manglona, Charles A. Manglona, Priscilla A. Manglona (who is married to William Torres, the Commissioner of Education), Roy A. Manglona (deceased), Francisca A. Manglona (deceased), Norma A. Manglona (deceased), Prudencio A. Manglona, and Thomas A. Manglona. I have named all the 10.
- Siemer: Can you tell us what your children do?
- Manglona: Well, my oldest son Vincent A. Manglona is involved in business. He owns several businesses in Rota and for the last three months he established a business in Guam. My other son, Junior, has a small store. Tommy is operating a car rental, Charles is running the restaurant and he is in charge of the hotel here. Paul has no business interests because

he is involved in politics. John is a lawyer. My daughter is staying in Saipan with my son-in-law. My daughter's working for the Senate now as a secretary, I believe. And, that's about it.

Siemer: When you started school, it was in Japanese times?

Manglona: I went only for nine months to Japanese school. Then the war came in.

Siemer: Did you learn Japanese before the war?

Manglona: No. I can pick up some because when my father had visitors for some sort of small party, then I learn to speak a little bit but because of the action of the Japanese to the war, for maybe about 15, 20 years nobody can speak the language so I lose some of the expressions. I start to pick it up but no way to converse freely.

Siemer: What kind of business was your father in?

Manglona: My father was only a farmer by profession. During Japanese time, people farmed, except those that have higher education. They were recruited by the Japanese government. But for the native people, very few were being hired by the Japanese. I believe that there are 20 local people being in Japanese government jobs. The rest, they just go and build their farms and make a living by running their own fruit stand.

Willens: About how many local people were on Rota during the Japanese times?

Manglona: I believe less than 500.

Willens: And about how many Japanese or Okinawans were here on Rota during that period?

Manglona: From what I've heard, close to 3,000.

Willens: How much land did your father have to farm?

Manglona: Well, I think he has about two hectares that's good for raising rice for staple food. He has two areas in Pearl Harbor and he owns almost like two hectares in Sakaga and he owned about nine hectares where he could grow the federico nuts. There is no flour during that time so they planted federico nuts. When it's time for harvesting, we have to be careful. When you cut that and take the nuts, you have to soak it for several weeks. So then you can grind it to make federico nut cake, I mean federico cake, you know flour cake. You can make tortillas out of that. I think that's the land that my father owns.

Willens: Did he sell the product to the Japanese?

Manglona: Well, the Japanese would only be interested in nuts and fruits, like bananas, avocado and olives. That's all. A lot of Okinawans and people from Korea also sold to the Japanese, and were better farmers in producing vegetables. We have a little competition.

Willens: Did the Japanese try to develop Rota for agricultural purposes?

Manglona: Well, I think the Japanese used most of the fertile land for the sugar plantations. My father owned land in the northern part of Rota, we call it Palacadra. They forced the native people to move to the southern most part of the island in order for them to use the most fertile soil where the water was most available. They concentrate on the sugar plantations. They make raw sugar in Rota and send it to the plant for refining. They also mined phosphates on the Sabana and sent it to the plant to use as fertilizer. And there is this plant also that they cultivate in Rota to be used for making clothing.

Siemer: Clothing?

Manglona: Yes. They cut the plant and they make fiber out of it. Then they process the fiber and make clothing or dresses out of that, that's what I heard.

Willens: Did they make it on the island of Rota or did they send it back to Japan?

Manglona: You have to harvest it randomly when the size is between 4 to 10 feet. You cut that and take most of that fiber part and dry it and roll it and ship it to the plant.

Siemer: Were the sugar cane plantations on the east side of the island?

Manglona: Yes and partly on the northern side and on the Sabana because they can find good soil. We're fortunate that after the war, the Naval Administration by the request of our local leaders, they asked permission to take back their land so that they can start their new life again during the American administration.

Siemer: Was the village in the same place during Japanese times?

Manglona: This is the village before the Japanese time from the Spanish and German times. But because of commercial proposals, the Japanese moved the people from here in SongSong village and placed them about five miles from here. The Japanese wanted their own nationals to be in SongSong village because it's close to the harbor. They used this facility for those people who are involved in business and for the government needs. And from what I heard, two persons by the name of Jose Tipano and Amherst Atalig, they don't want to go but they forced these two people out whether you like it or not. So, these two finally agreed. The rest cooperated and moved to the new place. The other two, very hard to convince them. At the end, the Japanese were very strict, almost like they applied martial law.

Willens: What was the impression that you and your father and mother had of the Japanese Administration? Did they see good things about it or principally bad things about it?

Manglona: Well, because the population was so small at that time, sometimes they say the life there is not bad because whatever they produce, there is a market. Because of the Japanese population, about 3,000 people, they can sell bananas and everything. There is money to buy commodities and at that time the commodities were very low priced. So, they say unless you can work then you suffered. But I saw the living conditions, and I made ends meet to buy things to live. From 1946 to I believe 1960, the living conditions during the Trust Territory Administration were not too good for Rota. Rota was not invaded and only about two or three personnel were in charge here to help the native people run the affairs of the government.

Siemer: What actually happened at the end of the war on Rota?

Manglona: Well, actually after the end of the war, the two villages were put down in the current two locations. The Naval Administration they have their own like commissioner. In each village there is a commissioner. They report to the Naval administrator who was residing in SongSong village. It was very small, like public works and hospital only. They used the local people to police. The educational system was conducted by teachers from the Japanese time. They started up the educational system but only to teach you how to read your own language and how to write your own language. From 1945, 1946 [there was] practically no educational system except in a local vernacular. Math is okay because the Japanese when they give you math and even in Chamorro you know how to add. So I was advanced in math when I left Rota in 1947 to go to Saipan. I spoke the language, but I have to struggle hard to improve myself so that I can read and I can write. With all my education, I would say I had maybe eight years of education, only two years in the elementary and four years in high school. The Naval Administration sent, I believe, one

- teacher in 1947 or 1948 to start first grade on Rota. But I missed that because I was off-island.
- Willens: When did you begin to learn English?
- Manglona: After three years I can communicate a little bit and then when I was in high school I can put my speaking ability in writing.
- Willens: When you went to Saipan to elementary school you were being taught in Chamorro?
- Manglona: No, mostly in English. I think what happened in Saipan, they have a teacher training course to make the local people become teachers. Even the teachers, sometimes they have problems giving you all the instruction. But those people who have a good educational background in Japanese, they learned about math already, so what they learned in the English portion I think that it's not that difficult. They used Americans for teaching English. For myself, I went to Guam because in Guam you find a lot of people that speak English already.
- Willens: Did you have relatives over there with whom you stayed?
- Manglona: Yes. I stayed with my grandmother. She was taking care of me and my other cousin. I went there from Rota to attend school because of my age. I cannot start first grade here. They start first grade in Rota for those people who are like eight and nine years old. I was already 12 at that time.
- Willens: Was there actually a battle between the U.S. forces and Japanese forces on Rota?
- Manglona: It's very unusual. There was no invasion of Rota but whatever bombs were left over from those that they throw in Saipan or in Tinian, they dropped in Rota to destroy all the available buildings and all the facilities. It was bad sometimes. One midnight they hit one hiding place for a local family and about three people died.
- Siemer: They were bombing SongSong village?
- Manglona: They bombed SongSong village where we used to stay. Only the small ruination of the church, that's what's left. In the daytime sometimes they dropped bombs. I was involved in community work to deliver food for the people. There's about three groups to prepare food for all the natives for the family. So, they recruit everybody, even 10 years old and above, able to gather up food. When the U.S. planes come, you hear the noise coming, we hide. Sometimes they drop bombs maybe about 500 feet away from us. We were hiding in the tree or whatever—a big log. And I recall when my cousin Manuel Manglona had been supervising one group, they dropped bombs and there's a fire already in that area. I think he tried to remove this one small bomb, it burst and exploded and cut his hand. Another group raised fruit and vegetables for the community. Mostly those able men they hired particularly to prepare for the Japanese military. So, they wanted to prepare for the community these younger boys and ladies. I suppose that those able men, the military they could make us to fight for their own military next. That's my recollection.
- Willens: Did the U.S. military eventually come to Rota?
- Manglona: Yes, but it's very late because I know that Saipan had already been invaded and Tinian had been invaded and Guam also. They started improving the damaged conditions in those places. But Rota is the last area to be landed. After they landed, they asked the Japanese soldiers to surrender. I think they [the Japanese] know [about the surrender] already so they went there and they took account of all military personnel. After that, they added all the civilian Japanese and they prepared them to ship to their own country.

- Willens: Were there any stragglers left here on Rota?
- Manglona: Not to my recollection. There was some confusion because some Japanese got married to local people. For those, there was definitely a lesson on marrying local people. They asked permission to stay in Rota but the U.S. said no. And those others, like Koreans, they managed to stay. I don't know whether they hid out or what, but I know about two or three Koreans that may not want to go back. There are three families that married to Japanese. They wanted to stay, but they have to leave. So some of the kids stay with the mother, and some kids go back with the father.
- Willens: Those were local families?
- Manglona: They are local families.
- Willens: Local women who married Japanese men?
- Manglona: Yes. They did not want to go back.
- Willens: The women did not go back to Japan?
- Manglona: Yes.
- Willens: They stayed here?
- Manglona: Yes. Some kids, who is the mother's favorite, they stayed. Who is the father's favorite, go back. I guess they kind of resisted on the men.
- Siemer: After the Naval Administration came in, who were the Chamorro people who were in charge of governmental affairs here?
- Manglona: I think among the prominent local people at that time involved, they put Andres Atalig and Carlos Calvo as the resident commissioners and hired Benigno Sablan to work in the administration area and they hired Thomas Manglona to work for public works. That's about it.
- Siemer: When was the first mayor chosen for all of Rota?
- Manglona: There were two locations after the war and then after that they decided to move to SongSong village so that is when the administration [people] were appointed. Thomas Manglona was the first commissioner.
- Siemer: When were people allowed to come back to SongSong village?
- Manglona: I think around 1949.
- Siemer: And how long did the appointed commissioner serve?
- Manglona: I think to some time in the 1950s.
- Siemer: Then who succeeded him?
- Manglona: Mitchell S. Manglona. I think Mitchell Manglona served from 1950 to something like 1960.
- Siemer: Then who came after him?
- Manglona: After him, Manuel Manglona but just for a short time. Maybe three months and then he resigned.
- Siemer: That's your cousin?
- Manglona: Yes. After he resigned, I was in the District Legislature, I think it was 1963 or 1964. But then at the time the District Administrator said, "Well, you have to be pleased with

this and I hope you could help the municipality because we want to see that the local government moving.” So, I volunteered to finish the four years term doing that. But I’m not prepared to become Chief Commissioner. At that time, I am enjoying my work with the government but their laws said well, you go and do part-time there, you are part-time here. Then we formed a Rota municipal charter. We tried to formulate local ordinances and we began by collecting more revenues, local revenues so that we can pay, I think at that time there’s four local teachers. So the government will pay half and the municipality will pay half. Sometimes we don’t have enough salary for the local teachers. So I got a headache, but I tried my best to see how could I pay them. I even asked the teachers to work part-time and I tell them okay you have worked two days and do something and we’ll pay you one day of work.

Willens: Sometime in the early 1950’s, I forget exactly the date, the Naval Administration moved out and the Department of the Interior took over.

Manglona: Right.

Willens: It was I think about 1952.

Manglona: Well, it was very hard at that time because the Office of the High Commissioner was in Honolulu. Sometimes they don’t make a physical appearance on the island for years.

Willens: Well Rota was a district all by itself?

Manglona: Yes, in 1952.

Willens: Did you feel that Rota suffered during the Interior Department’s time?

Manglona: We suffered tremendously after the Navy left and they put in the Interior Department.

Willens: Why?

Manglona: Because the headquarters of the Interior Department is in Honolulu, we suffered from lack of consultation, we suffered for medical reasons, we suffered for economic reasons.

Siemer: All of those things were worse when the Trust Territory came in?

Manglona: They put only one representative here. For communication, if we have an emergency, you set a fire in the Sabana area, our most hilly place, so that the military plane passing by, they will know there is something wrong. That’s the signal. If the radio is no good, we set a fire as an indication that we’ve got problems.

Willens: During the Naval Administration time, was the headquarters in Guam?

Manglona: Before 1950s I think, the Naval Administration was in Honolulu. The Naval Administration moved to Guam somewhere around 1952, 1953.

Willens: Were communications better during the Naval Administration time than during the Interior Department time?

Manglona: Not all of the Naval Administration time. When the headquarters moved to Guam, then they were closer. They would look over the six districts, like Rota, Truk, Ponapei, Palau, Yap and Marshall Islands, more often. The communication system improved. We had voice communication, but it was hard to use. I recall they used small boats to get back and forth, even at the time when I worked for the government. When I was in school like from 1950 I had a terrible time of coming [back here] and sometimes I ride in a small outboard motor boat. But I make friends. Some Guamanians they take me back after vacation and I went to see my parents.

Siemer: So you came back on fishing boats?

Manglona: Yes and others that were coming to Rota, like traders, they get their produce out on small boats until probably 1954 when the Manglonas owned this motorboat, like 40 foot, 60 foot. That went once a week. So that's more improving. When I was in school, there was no way to receive letters from your parents. So I would go to the boat basin in Guam and ask them for news about Rota. Every time the boat is scheduled to leave [for Rota], I would tell them you go to my house and find out from my father is there any message. I make friends with that guy who worked on the boat [going back and forth to Rota]. I even worked washing taxis to make money and I buy him drinks here. When I was in school, my father sometimes he prepares a case of potato or cantaloupe. That's the kind of support he is giving to his children who are studying in Guam. I start to be more confident that I know my parents are still living, in good condition, and even give me some sort of support. At least I could get things from Rota to give to my sponsor. They are happy because we do give them support. There are times many students had problems because the sponsor is the one that takes care of the clothing, the food, the shelter. If the sponsor is not happy with you, then it is difficult. I know a lot of students like myself will stick to one sponsor. My first cousin took me to a construction job. I managed to learn that trade. I learned how to lay block, how to manage to build a house. Eventually that was helpful to us in the construction business. When I first opened construction in Rota, they were surprised because I learned from my cousin what it took to be a carpenter. In Japanese times when I stayed in Guam I didn't have much problem. I was the babysitter for two kids, both are I think 7 or 8. It bothered me because I need to study but sometimes after the kids go to sleep I tried my very best to study. I need more study because of my lacking in English.

Willens: When you came back, did you work for the TTPI here on Rota?

Manglona: Yes.

Willens: Did you have the occasion to go to Saipan during those years?

Manglona: No, very seldom.

Willens: During the 1950's, the High Commissioner formed something called the Council of Micronesia. It was an advisory group that had one representative from each of the six districts. I gather that Rota must have been represented on that advisory committee. Do you remember who represented Rota?

Manglona: I recall that. But I don't remember the name.

Willens: It had different names.

Manglona: The first representative, I believe, was Mitchell Manglona or Juan Diaz. Then the second one, I believe, was my father, Prudencio A. Manglona.

Willens: Your father served on the council?

Manglona: Yes and I think Mitchell Manglona also, because there are always two representatives.

Willens: Were there two?

Manglona: Yes. I acted as interpreter at that time.

Willens: At one point, the members of the council recommended to the High Commissioner that there be a Congress of Micronesia. Do you remember any discussion about whether having a Trust Territory-wide legislative body was a good idea?

Manglona: There was a lot of discussion of how to make the districts more closer to each other because there were a lot of problems in Micronesia. We had problems in the educational system, we had problems in the health system, we had problems in economic development, we

- had problems especially in the maintenance here. There was also a major issue about the sea zone, that's the best, the issue that we can hardly come up to conclusion when we discuss that. That's the major issue because the people from the other districts they say that their rights in the ocean are as far as the horizon. And in our case, we know that it's all right only to the reef.
- Siemer: Back in those days, in the 1950's and early 1960's, had you traveled out to the other districts?
- Manglona: Well, no. Let's see, during 1957 when I went to public school training, that's the first travel that I made out of my area. But, yes I traveled when I was the district administrator's representative way back in I think 1958, 1959.
- Siemer: What was your impression back in those days of the other districts and whether there was enough common interest for them all to come together?
- Manglona: Well, let me go back to the Micronesian advisory council. It was just like your advisory council where you have no legislative authority. It was like executives talking and discussing about the problems of Micronesia. Some problems were the same and [these are] mostly a lot of issues about education, scholarships. Land is a major problem but different [in the Marianas as compared to the other districts] again mainly because they have this tradition in which I learned they have their own like family land you know, and land is very hard to distribute because if you are a member of the family everybody from generation to generation owns it. It is hard to divide so, we have complications in that. Also, here [in the Marianas] property goes to the males [by inheritance]. Over there [in the other districts], the female side would be where it is inherited and distributed. For example, in my case, we have three brothers and then we have two sisters. Only the three brothers, my father would give them the land, but not the two girls we have as the custom. But there [in the other districts], the custom I think was different. Because from what I heard, the female is the one that gave birth so they say the father could be anybody and nobody knows, but the mother is for certain and that's the one that's strong [for inheritance purposes].
- Siemer: So land passed through the mother's side?
- Manglona: That's what I heard.
- Willens: Where was that? What district are you referring to?
- Manglona: I think Palau and Yap; they have a different custom, from what I heard.
- Willens: You mentioned that the council members had no legislative power. All they could do was advise the High Commissioner.
- Manglona: Right.
- Willens: What did the High Commissioner usually do with the advice of the council; would he act upon it?
- Manglona: It's very mixed. He had a cabinet and he tried to tell his own cabinet what to do. But from the agenda or from the transcription of our meeting, I know what we say there. Then the following year when we go and meet again, the same problems are being discussed. We give them to the High Commissioner but you know, even if the High Commissioner agrees, it is not always done. I know of one permanent leader from Truk and it's very funny for her to say you Americans talk, talk, talk, talk, talk like the bird. From what we discussed last year or three years ago, you say you want to help us, still all you do is talk, talk, talk, talk, talk. So then they would say, "I'm glad you mentioned that. Go through it and try again."

- Willens: Next year.
- Manglona: Yes.
- Willens: The High Commissioner in the late 1950's was named Nucker. Do you recall having any dealings with him?
- Manglona: Well, yes because he presented me an award, a service performance award. During that time, there was an administrator here, and I wanted the administrative assistant position. I was actually a member of Rota Municipal Council for two years before being appointed a commissioner. A lot of people come to see the island and they don't like it; especially their wives. Where they work, it's a small Quonset hut. Where they are going to stay, no power. And particularly in the small store, you cannot find baby food or candles that they need. No laundry. So nobody picked Rota. What happened, they appointed me as acting administrator for three years. I did my best.
- Siemer: What years were those?
- Manglona: I believe sometime around 1957, 1958 and 1959. After Nucker, the High Commissioner then was Benitez.
- Willens: Jose Benetiz was the Deputy High Commissioner.
- Manglona: I think at that time, Benitez happened to be there and that's the time Chief Petrus came in. They say, "Oh, I like you Mr. Petrus, I like what you say." But I don't worry. I try my very best to tell the people the truth.
- Willens: Well, the Kennedy Administration came in 1961 and that's when High Commissioner Goding was appointed and Mr. Benitez became Deputy High Commissioner.
- Manglona: That guy [Nucker] was okay, but he had been acting for about maybe a year before he was appointed to commissioner.
- Willens: He served for a long time I think.
- Manglona: He was the first one from 1950s to 60, I think it was.
- Willens: Did you see any change in Interior Department policy when the Kennedy appointees took over?
- Manglona: I think it's starting to improve then. I know because even in the administration of the island of Rota, we improved the organization. From the Navy time to the Interior [Department] in 1950 to 1953, it's still the same. From 1955 they add more personnel to establish the land management, the division of agriculture, which would fall under the land management. The school also had improved, and public works was operating [on Rota]. I think at that time we have maybe close to thirty plus [personnel]. When I came back from school, lucky if you had 15 employees.
- Willens: How about in 1961, did you get more funding or was there more attention paid to Rota at that point?
- Manglona: I believe they have a separate bottom line with their own budget. I managed to handle the ledger system in Rota and we go according to what we have. Although it's very small but it's getting better.
- Willens: In 1962 the Naval Administration left Saipan and Tinian and responsibility for Saipan and Tinian was given to the Interior Department. Rota was then combined those other islands as part of the Marianas District. What was your reaction as a leader on Rota to be combined with Saipan and Tinian as a single district?

- Manglona: There was big concern here that because we are one local area. The growth that they have in Saipan, the transitory government really being different at times, we wanted our own separate district government. They made that major decision when the Navy left to put us with the Marianas Islands.
- Willens: Were you ever consulted about that decision?
- Manglona: We have raised that concern in the Municipal Council, but there is nothing we can do. We are a small island.
- Siemer: Was there consideration at that time on your part about consolidating with Guam?
- Manglona: We're not actually asked to do that, but through our own thinking our people feel that we would be better off to be with Guam because of the district support, more leadership from Guam than from Saipan at that time. But I know the Mayor at that time was very concerned, and also the Municipal Council. But the Deputy High Commissioner made the decision that the Rota population is too small, even the government organization is too small, and they don't want duplication. They didn't want to change the Trust Territory and so they stayed with six districts.
- Willens: When Saipan and Tinian became part of the Interior's administration, all the other districts had a district legislature and in 1963 the Marianas District Legislature was formed. As I understand you earlier, you became a member of the first Marianas District Legislature.
- Manglona: Yes.
- Willens: Were you the only representative from Rota at that time?
- Manglona: No, we have three—myself, Mateo M. Masga, and Benjamin [Manglona].
- Willens: What was your impression of the first Marianas District Legislature?
- Manglona: Well, at that time, they already formed a party system in Saipan. Ever since Saipan had the Saipan Congress, they called it, always the Popular Party controlled. The Territorial Party always lost the elections at that time. So, when they select anyone, it is based on the party. We worked within the District Legislature but it's hard to get more for our island. Although they give us little, it is not enough to maintain our water, to maintain our power.
- Siemer: In the District Legislature did they identify you with the Territorial Party?
- Manglona: Yes, that's the reason.
- Siemer: So you were in the minority.
- Willens: Was the Territorial Party in Rota at that time you went to the District Legislature?
- Manglona: Yes, because at that time they formed the Congress of Micronesia also and Benjamin was running as the representative of Rota under the Territorial name so they identify us as Territorial, and that's the reason why then.
- Siemer: How did Benjamin make that choice?
- Manglona: Well, I think Joe Sablan used to come over here as a Territorial and he really liked Melchior Manglona. They were very close friends. There were some other connections through the family in Saipan. And Luis Borja, I think he influenced the leaders in Rota at the time. They formed a party and they called us Territorial [Party] in combination with the Saipan Territorial [Party]. We didn't know that the Saipan Popular Party has more of a majority, so we have problems. We don't know much about Saipan at that time.

- Willens: The difference between the Popular Party and Territorial Party on Saipan was based on whether they wanted to become affiliated with the United States directly or whether they wanted to be reunified with Guam.
- Manglona: Later on, after they made us Territorial, there is a campaign that the Democratic Party wanted to be affiliated with Guam. The Popular Party lost and the Territorial Party they say they want direct with the U.S. instead of integration of Guam, I believe.
- Willens: What was your position on that choice?
- Manglona: I selected the direct with the U.S.
- Siemer: What advantage did you think that would give Rota if there was direct affiliation with the U.S.?
- Manglona: Well because all the grants are direct instead of coming from the middleman, that's our main goal. We start to work with people to run our own affairs and still Guam would tell us what to do. Joeten was very vocal at that time, and Joe Sablan, and they say, "Why should we join with Guam when it's better we go to the U.S. and we run our own affairs."
- Willens: But of all the islands in the Northern Marianas, Rota had the closest relationship with Guam, is that correct?
- Manglona: Yes, and then after we see that we are being penalized by the Democratic Party [because of their majority on Saipan] sometimes we say that if this continues we believe it's better to annex ourselves with Guam.
- Siemer: What happened here in Rota in 1969 when there was the plebiscite on reunification with Guam?
- Manglona: Well, I believe the people voted to be in favor of it.
- Siemer: You had gone to school in Guam and knew people there. Were you surprised when the Guamanians voted against reunification?
- Manglona: We feel very bad that they are the very same Chamorros, same culture, and they voted against us. But I blame lack of political education. Maybe they were scared in Guam also that if we go with Guam they would have more responsibility for us here.
- Siemer: It would cost them more money?
- Manglona: Cost them more money. I don't know whether that was the most principal part of the reason, but we were sad when they rejected us to be part of them. So from then on, we try our very best to see how to be closer with the United States. I think a free association was being discussed at that time. We have problems also because the Congress of Micronesia, they conclude they want free association and we would rather move to be like married with the U.S. They were scared of commonwealth.
- Willens: There was a secretarial order in 1964 creating the Congress of Micronesia and the first election I think was in 1965. Some of the people on Saipan with whom we've talked, recall that the people on Saipan, particularly the Popular Party leadership, were opposed to having a Congress of Micronesia. What was your sense on Rota here to having a Trust Territory-wide Congress of that kind?
- Manglona: Well, to my recollection, I believe we are supporting that. Saipan at that time rejected it because their legislative body is very strong and financially they're making it okay. They are at that time very powerful and their own Congress was very powerful so they reject that.

But they don't think about the economic aspects of having the Congress here. Because by forming the Congress of Micronesia, you improve their economy because of the housing, staffing and the people coming from the other districts to create more revenue.

Willens: Was it always understood that the Congress of Micronesia would sit in Saipan?

Manglona: I am not too sure, but I think some leaders like Joeten did try to support that. Actually, the Popular Party at that time, they don't want the Congress. We have no choice because we are already a district. So, it's better to form our district-wide legislature. But I know even they burn the flag, after they have meeting I think they come up and burn the U.S. flag.

Willens: That's right. There were some of those incidents.

Manglona: You recall it.

Willens: Yes, indeed.

Manglona: That's my recollection. Of course, in Saipan the power of the local legislature was the normal basic concern there.

Willens: Did you ever consider running for the Congress of Micronesia?

Manglona: I was away at that time, but if I had happened to be here they might put me in as the candidate. At that time I received my fellowship from the United Nations to study public administration at the Philippines University.

Willens: When was that?

Manglona: 1963, 1964. So, I missed that opportunity. So what happened, my brother Ben was the candidate.

Willens: It's possible that since you were older than Benjamin that you might have been the candidate rather than Benjamin if you had been here?

Manglona: I believe so. I was running in politics at that time being a part-time mayor, holding government jobs and being a Chief Commissioner for a short period of time. Benjamin is a very humble, respectful person and he had the ability to do that job. I think at that time I was interested, but I was in the PI. And being away, I don't want to put my name in. Then they selected Benjamin.

Siemer: How long were you in the Philippines?

Manglona: Six months. I was supposed to go to Hawaii, but I completed the program in the Philippines.

Siemer: How did you find that program? Was it useful?

Manglona: Actually, it was a very good program because you study half day in the university, and then go for half day in the various departments. You can see them doing things and doing research. They assigned me in the Bureau of Personnel for like one month besides taking a course in college and another half day in the civil service because we are handling personnel in Rota so I am like a student in the recruitment area.

Siemer: So you could actually see how the government departments were doing.

Manglona: Yes.

Willens: How were you selected for that opportunity?

Manglona: I was selected, I think, by the District Administrator at that time. It was Maloney and then I believe there's another guy, Coleman.

- Willens: Peter Coleman?
- Manglona: Yes, then Ada. So, I think I was recommended by Maloney because of my experience being an acting district administrator. I know Ada is not happy, because Ada thinks there are other people in Saipan who should be appointed for that.
- Willens: Were you the only one chosen from the Northern Marianas?
- Manglona: Yes. I think that Felipe Borja went to Australia, but that was during the Naval Administration.
- Willens: I see.
- Manglona: So, at that time, I was recommended by the administrator.
- Willens: Was this a United Nations program?
- Manglona: This is a United Nations program. You get recommendations, and I think there is some sort of organization in the United Nations that interviewed people in the Pacific Islands. You have to write the substance of why you should be selected, something like that.
- Willens: You had to write a statement?
- Manglona: Yes. So I tried to let them feel that I really need to go. I am being humble in why I want to go to study. I told them that I am assuming a responsible position on the island of Rota and I'm in lack of educational opportunity to further my education. I'm assuming this position with only eight years of education and I want to study more in the area of management and finance. It is sad for Rota because there are no other capable people that can do this because they all go to school and until we get people coming back it takes maybe three years or four years we do not have anyone available. I think that is why I was selected. It must have been one page I think I wrote.
- Willens: Just one page?
- Manglona: Yes.
- Willens: But you must have been very persuasive?
- Manglona: Yes. Actually, when they put in your name, you have to write something and that's the declaration to get an application to fill out everything, what is your future and what you do and everything. Then you say what reason you have for wanting it [the scholarship]. That's where I started from. I did mine and I left everybody surprised. The District Administrator recommended several people, but then they reviewed those from the Marianas. I think they invited a total of six from all the districts, but from the Marianas I was picked.
- Siemer: During the Trust Territory times, the United Nations would send visiting missions occasionally. Did they come to Rota?
- Manglona: Yes. Very interesting because that's for inspection I think every three or five years. They used to come and inspect the affairs of the U.S. Trusteeship. That's the time when political leaders complained that the administering power did not do everything [they should]. People thought that if they complained, they would get drastic action. I used to be the interpreter for whenever these missions came back. The municipal government asked me to be the interpreter. So, I'm going against my own office [as assistant district administrator] in supporting the municipal government.
- Willens: The complaints were against the administration and you were a part of the administration.

- Manglona: The complaints were against the district administrator and, you know, it's very interesting. We have said a lot of things that have to be done. Like education. Sometimes they said that if they order four dozen pencils then they get one dozen. If they ask for medicine or something like that from Saipan, they don't get much. If they buy a new car [in Saipan], they send the old car [to Rota], like that. And one thing that we always make an issue, this is the thing that we never get settled, we fight to get our local compensation on the mining of the Sabana. They mined the Sabana, the Japanese, and we want compensation from that.
- Siemer: From the Japanese?
- Manglona: From the Japanese. Their miners ship thousands and thousands of tons, most of it being sent to Japan.
- Siemer: And they never paid anybody for that?
- Manglona: They never pay.
- Willens: Did the United Nations ever pass on your complaints to the Japanese government and request compensation?
- Manglona: I think they passed on them on. They said they would review it every time we asked them to check it.
- Willens: Can you remember any single issue that you presented to the United Nations visiting mission where they did something for you?
- Manglona: No. The other issues, like education for Tinian, the U.S. reviewed it and I think they improved on that to some extent. Little by little. The U.S. budget [for the Trust Territory] was very small at that time, although the Trust Territory government needed to build many things like the water system and the road system. The Trust Territory was at that time lucky if they got basic things they needed.
- Willens: Did you and the other leaders on Rota think it was useful to have the United Nations visiting mission come and listen to you?
- Manglona: Well, it's nice to see important people coming to the island. Very rare to see that. So, at least somebody came. No reporter, no newspaper and no others talked about our problems. So, at least those concerned about the welfare of the people we could try our best to tell anybody that came here about our problems. We talked about our problems so that they can let other people in the responsible authority know about our suffering here.
- Willens: Do you remember any discussions with the United Nations visiting mission about future political status and what the people here on Rota wanted?
- Manglona: I think when we bring that up, they are not in the position to reject us. They say that the reason why we have this U.S. Trusteeship to make us develop in our social and economic areas. So, we say, we're ready.
- Willens: Do you recall any discussions with Dr. Palacios about future political status?
- Manglona: I know they visited Rota to meet with people. They tossed that idea around and, at the beginning, we tried to be favorable to free association. But, later on the Marianas wants its own political entity with the U.S. In Micronesia, they are selling the free association, and national entity. And I think that they can't go back to this and leave free association at that time.

- Willens: A few of the leaders in the Northern Marianas thought that the entire Trust Territory ought to stay together but the majority on Saipan wanted a separate status. What was your view?
- Manglona: Well, I think we are very behind if we followed the other districts. We feel that we want to govern ourselves like the government in Guam because Guam is very prosperous. Micronesia, I know they have to be sure we respect their culture and we don't want to disturb them. We want a more democratic system of government than they want there and for that reason we knew that it's better if we do it directly with the U.S. They [the other districts] just wanted [U.S.] support for the government of Micronesia. That was their idea. And after we separate, even themselves they cannot get together and pursue that type of other government they like. And even I think it's fragmentation. The idea of free association didn't bring them together.
- Willens: The concept of U.S. citizenship was thought to be very important by some people. Did you and your family have any sense that U.S. citizenship was something that you wanted to achieve?
- Manglona: Well, for economic purposes and educational purposes at that time, we feel citizenship was very important for us because we don't have passports. It's hard to go to the U.S. at that time because we are aliens and so we don't have employment opportunities and other things. We want to have the freedom of going to the U.S. and Guam, which is very close, for the employment opportunities.
- Willens: The Marianas District Legislature created its Political Status Commission in 1972 after the United States agreed to separate negotiations. Do you recall how the government here on Rota decided who should be its representatives on the Commission?
- Manglona: Yes. Through public hearings and so forth, we support that idea and we select our own representatives. I believe the first one is Benjamin.
- Siemer: And Joannes?
- Manglona: Joannes Taimanao, right.
- Willens: Did Greg Calvo ever serve on the Commission to your knowledge?
- Manglona: No, I think he might have probably joined in a temporary membership.
- Willens: There's a little confusion in the record and we're trying to clear it up.
- Manglona: The first selection I think was Benjamin and Joannes. Some how I think Joannes either resigned and then they offered it to Greg Calvo.
- Siemer: What was Joannes doing back then?
- Manglona: He worked under my administration as one of my assistants at that time.
- Willens: How did Benjamin and Joannes report back to you and the leaders of Rota as to what the Commission was doing?
- Manglona: Well, whenever there is a [Commission] meeting they called the Municipal Council and the Mayor to call the people and have meetings and discuss what's going on in the [Commission] meeting.
- Willens: Did you ever have the occasion to meet Ambassador Williams or other members of the U.S. delegation?
- Manglona: During that process, I think Ambassador Williams was very active. He visited here and we had others coming over here and discuss this relationship.

- Willens: What was your impression of Ambassador Williams?
- Manglona: I think Ambassador Williams is fair enough to tell the people about various issues and all the things that being discussed on the legal status and even what negotiation they make with the U.S., what protection there is for the people here in the Northern Marianas against the U.S. I think during the negotiation there are some issues that the U.S. is not in favor of and especially in the case of Rota. He's very sensitive really to our background and experience in this sort of administration. We're a minority and we tried to get more protection in this negotiation because even though you say, this is worth millions, they know it will be very difficult to get part of even one million in CIP if our political party is [in the] minority. We tried our best to represent our interests. Even if we are with Tinian which we know will not always support us, we cannot beat the majority on Saipan. So with this I think he understood our situation and he tried to see how we convince the U.S. government. I do respect Ambassador Williams and the political status he agreed to although it lacked in a certain amount of money for our protection.
- Willens: Land alienation and restricting the transfer of land to local people was one of the issues that came up. Was that an important issue to you?
- Manglona: Well, land is very important to everybody here. So, we want to see that the land will be returned back to the people, the local government.
- Willens: You are talking about the public lands?
- Manglona: Yes. This is one of the areas that we would like to see happen.
- Willens: What were your views about the U.S. request for land on Tinian for military purposes?
- Manglona: Well, I feel sorry about the people of Tinian who are giving a major part of their land [to the military]. Probably it could be much better if they give to the military on a case-by-case basis. The government can use a portion of land if the military needs it. Or, maybe in the absence of the military if no facilities are installed here this land will go back to the people. You see, I think now the land needs to be returned. The provision is not properly protected for the people of Tinian. I know they do nothing wrong to give [the land] to the military only for temporary use as needed because I know there are a lot of conflicts, and we need also security in our own area. I heard that the Covenant legislation was being agreed between the Northern Marianas and the U.S. because of the Tinian land. The people of Tinian are being very vocal even up to now about this. I was reading in the paper recently [where they were] saying they want the military to give back their land so they can help themselves economically by developing the land. I hope there is a flexibility there, so they can reevaluate the need for the military [land] and I hope that land will be leased for public purpose. This is a major problem in Tinian now.
- Siemer: Here on Rota families had owned land for generations. On Tinian that was different. Families had come to Tinian from other places after the war and had not been established on Tinian for a long time. Do you think that made a difference with respect to the attitude about giving land to the military?
- Manglona: Well, that's probably one of the reasons. I agree with you, most of the people on Tinian, they're Chamorro but staying in Yap for a long time. Then they leave Yap to move to either to Rota, Tinian, or Saipan. The Naval Administration offered Tinian and I think they select Tinian because they don't have land in Saipan, they don't have land in Rota and through homestead maybe they can get that in Tinian. I was in Tinian in the 1950s and I saw a lot of big buildings, even military equipment. They got everything. So, they are very rich people because they have everything they need there and maybe that is the reason

why they select Tinian. Everybody got land then through homesteads but for generations they don't have land there, it's all belong to the public.

Willens: Is it your understanding then that the Chamorros on Yap were given a choice by the Naval Administration of Rota, Saipan or Tinian?

Manglona: I think that's being offered. What I heard was that the Naval Administration asked the commissioner whether it's okay for people to stay on Saipan. Even the people here [on Rota] at one time, this is very funny, but we almost moved to Tinian. It was being offered I think it was in the late 1940s, I think 1948, 1949.

Siemer: So homesteads on Tinian were offered to people here?

Manglona: From what I heard, they wanted Rota to be a grazing land for cattle. And they wanted people on Rota to move to Tinian because economically Tinian is better. The development is already there. They have airports. They have good roads and all the military facilities available in Tinian. At the time the population is less than 500. I think our leaders go there and see and they talk to people. Our people said no, we would rather die in Rota than to work there. So what happened, I think they asked the people from Yap also to come over there. They wanted to move from Yap because somehow the people are suffering. So they moved them to Tinian and they liked Tinian because [there were] so many facilities there. Somebody told me, one of the members, he died already but it was Antonio Atalig, a mayor to be a member in the negotiation. So his brother Andres told him that they want Rota to become a grazing land. A millionaire from Texas is involved. I think the U.S. Senate or some Congressman had a plan and they tried to push the people toward that.

Willens: I never heard that before. Did anyone from Rota move to Tinian?

Manglona: Some, including some Manglonas. Also the Korean that I told you stayed here and a Borja family. Many people from Rota go there. A lot of families go there. Mostly Tinian is the majority from Rota.

Willens: One thing that came up near the end of the negotiations was a request from the Rota Municipal Council in January of 1975, that the Covenant be changed to guarantee that there would be a bicameral legislature in which the three major islands would be equally represented in one house. Do you have any recollection as to how that resolution got drafted and approved by the Rota Municipal Council?

Manglona: I remember the discussion about the legislature. They were going to form a bicameral [legislature] and that was to have Rota represented equally. The Municipal Council and the Mayor at that time wanted that representation so that Rota will be well represented instead of like in the past where we are always the minority. Before, the U.S. can make sure that Rota, Tinian and Saipan get fair shares, but what if we lose that opportunity now. At times, Rota was represented [in the Congress of Micronesia] by a member from Saipan, I believe at that time, it was Joe Mafnas. Benjamin went to school in Hawaii I think at that time and we'd lose our candidate here. The candidate from Saipan was representing Tinian and Rota. So that's why we don't want to have that any more. We wanted people who worked here regularly to represent us and that's part of the experience that we found out [during the Congress of Micronesia] that type of representation does not work.

Willens: Who was the mayor of Rota then?

Manglona: Antonio Atalig.

Willens: Atalig in 1974 and 1975?

Manglona: Yes.

- Willens: Did the Municipal Council or the Mayor's office have a lawyer that was advising you at the time?
- Manglona: I think that, he's not a lawyer but he's an economic advisor. I forgot the name. The Mayor is very powerful at that time because he got an American guy working for him. And actually at that time there are three advisors for the mayor, and I worked in his office then. Limes, I remember, and there was another one who was an economics major, and the last one is Weisman.
- Willens: David Weisman?
- Manglona: A local lawyer.
- Willens: He was living over here and working in the Mayor's office?
- Manglona: I think he was the one, I think he was working here at the time.
- Willens: And would these advisors typically do the drafting of legislation?
- Manglona: They received help from the advisors and maybe for the Council to draft legislation.
- Willens: Did you expect that the Saipan representatives on the Marianas Political Status Commission would agree with the request for a bilateral legislature?
- Manglona: I know they're not in favor, but that's the only thing that we can get together and install this bicameral legislature.
- Willens: The resolution was very strongly worded and said that unless the Covenant is changed in this respect, we the people of Rota, will not support and vote for the Covenant. Do you think that the people here felt that strongly about the matter?
- Manglona: Yes, because this is our chance to voice ourselves. Not like when we stopped being a separate district. They put us in the Marianas District and then we have no voice. At that time they just say well, you belong to the district of the Marianas and the headquarters is in Saipan, so all the decision is in the central government in Saipan. No voice, no decision from the government here. That's the reason why we want to see that we have a bicameral [legislature] and we need to be well represented. Balanced government.
- Willens: The United States delegation took the view that this question of a bicameral legislature ought to be left to the future Marianas Constitutional Convention to decide whether there should be a bicameral legislature. Were you concerned that leaving this question to the future constitutional convention might not protect Rota's interest?
- Manglona: I think that is one of the ideas of the Municipal Council and that's the reason that we thought we should put it in this political status document.
- Willens: Did you attend the signing of the Covenant in February of 1975 that took place at the Mt. Carmel auditorium?
- Manglona: No, I never did. I don't know the reason why I didn't attend that.
- Siemer: Did anyone from Rota go to Washington during the time that the Covenant was being considered by the Congress? Did you go?
- Manglona: For that purpose? No. I think the Mayor and the Speaker of the Municipal Council and Benjamin and Joannes attended. I think they went to represent us at that time.
- Siemer: Had you travelled much in the States by that time?
- Manglona: Again I was fortunate to be granted a Secretary of State leadership grant to work in the U.S. in 1974.

Siemer: Where did you go?

Manglona: I went to about 11, 12 states on an educational tour. I studied about the farming community and small rural type of administration operation. I went to Boston and I went to a small place where there are fishermen and observed that. I was so surprised because I think they have about 3,000 people, and it was a small community but an organized community, and they tell me about the problems also there. They ask the state government to help them but I don't think they have representatives. So there is only the county supervisor there. They've got an infirmary and fire department, that's all they have. The educational system is provided by the state government and I think they only have about the fire supervisor and a nurse something like the medic.

Siemer: This was near Boston?

Manglona: Yes. It is an area there where most of the people are fishermen. I thought we have a much better operation here than what they have. I am more powerful than what they have there, but the land is most like it's colonial type building and all and they're well-maintained. There is a big government facility. I think I've got it better off here.

Siemer: Where else did you go on that trip?

Manglona: Then I visited portions of New York and I went to the United Nations and Washington. I went to Kansas to look at their livestock operations. The grain they raised and the potatoes. I was inspired with the kind of operation that they have. They create a one pass system [to harvest the crops] you know, all tomatoes one pass, and my goodness what a big farm. They ride me in a air conditioned type of tractor, you have water and you can wash yourself and of course that's not the kind of facility we have here. I say well, it's very sophisticated type of community they have over here. When I think about lunch he just parks his own tractor and we eat together. It's real organized almost like six hours tour. The rows of onions, potatoes, what a big field. One area that I was so surprised when I went to was a dairy farm. I think he maintained about maybe close to 100 dairy cows. At feeding time, the cows are coming. The grain keeps pouring and circulating by equipment. It's all coming in. Each cow has a number there. Number 1, 2, 3 up to maybe a hundred. I saw that each cow would come in and smell it, something like that, and go to the right place. Very smart. Normally they recognize [their stall] and they will go directly to their own place and then start to be milked. So, I look around and I say, "How do you do this?" Well, they say really the cows know already so everybody should know where the right place is. That's my main observation. And I happened to go there because there is a law student there from Rota, which is Pete Atalig. Just to meet him.

Siemer: Oh, he was in Kansas at the time?

Manglona: Yes. I went to Boston because we've got another student there who happened to be my niece studying for medicine but unfortunately she was not successful. When I went to Kansas I had a bad experience there with my driver. We went about 4 o'clock in the evening and we missed the hotel where we were supposed to stay overnight. We bypassed in the wrong direction so we turned back again. Then we asked the gas station to get us to that hotel. He said we better turn back again, take another three miles you know. I was worried.

Siemer: So you saw a lot of the states on that trip.

Manglona: Yes. I stopped in San Francisco, Connecticut, New York, Missouri, and Pennsylvania.

Siemer: How long were you gone?

- Manglona: It's a one month tour. I stayed like three or four days in each place. I also visited Rhode Island.
- Siemer: In 1976 after the Covenant was approved, there was an election for Con-Con delegates. Here in Rota there were four older people elected and four quite young people were also elected. How did Pete Atalig and David Atalig and those younger people get selected?
- Manglona: Well, Pete Atalig's the son of the former mayor. Greg Calvo is the son of Carlos Calvo. They're young, but they're educated. There also happened to be myself, Benjamin also and Leon Taisacan. We were born here and all our time we spent here with people. We know the problems and things like that. We are very concerned, we are very sensitive to the needs of the people. We know that these educated people when they come [back from school], they need better salary opportunity so they work in Saipan. Somehow to our surprise, although we appointed Benjamin to be our spokesman, they turned in different direction. They go on their own way. We had agreed on [our positions on] certain issues [being considered by the Constitutional Convention]. Although we discussed, we talked about what the problems were, they didn't stay with us. We even called the Mayor to help us [persuade the younger delegates to stay united with us]. Actually we formed a strategy, like remember we wanted three lieutenant governors? I know they don't like that. So, then our position was at least to make the mayors powerful because we know already from experience. We are always a subdistrict and have no power and it's hard to develop this island if we do not get the resources. So, this is an opportunity for us that we've got to form a new government. We try our best to see that we stick together so our position will be respected by the other delegates. I think the leaders in Saipan are more influential. We don't have many resources and we don't know whether [the Trust Territory] Administration is involved. They [the younger delegates from Rota] all work for the administration. Like Pete Dela Cruz, he was the economic development officer at that time. Pete [Atalig] is working for the Attorney General. At the beginning, we're working closely together and then somehow when we come to an issue that will protect the interest of the people of Rota, they don't respect that. I know they are educated, but they are inexperienced in some things and not sensitive to our needs sometimes. They don't respect that [issue about which the older delegates walked out]. This is one of the things that is so frustrating. It is useless to continue on building when we cannot among ourselves understand the problem.
- Siemer: Do you think that Larry Guerrero and Dr. Palacios, with some of the Territorial leaders in Saipan, worked with the younger Rota delegates to persuade them?
- Manglona: Well, I cannot truly say that. Somebody might have talked to them because they are very close to the Administration. They are in the central government. See like homesteads, when we discussed about homesteads they thought it was a good thing. They explained the reason why we need that. I know a lot of people could not have land so at least we can protect it [the right to have a homestead].
- Siemer: The Rota delegation was together on land alienation and public land. You were together on the judicial system and natural resources and things like that. The only things you were not together on, I think, were the Executive Branch and the Legislative Branch, right?
- Manglona: That's right. They [the younger delegates] are going to make the mayor probably very weak then. We [the older delegates] don't like that to happen. To that kind of issue, we experienced that. We want to give more executive opportunity to the mayor here so that the mayor will run his own local affairs instead of [being] interrupted [by the Governor]. Like now, the governor would not recognize the local authority. It's just like a comic book. How would you say that? During my time, I need to improve the roads. That's first

transitional mayor. I prepare my budget to put the road system here, the water system, the hospital and everything. But because the Executive Branch is in the other party, it is very hard.

Siemer: Because Carlos Camacho was in a different party?

Manglona: Really hard. We took him to court. Although he [the Governor] and the Mayor were together in the election, they were supporting each other, because of some misunderstanding, the Mayor cannot get things he wants to build up the economy of Rota. All that development that you see is mostly in Saipan, nothing new here. The only thing new here is the airport. Airport renovation, we have some money for that. But other things are not built. The only thing I can see new now is the water system but it's duplication. We have already got a water system in the village. I don't know why they want their own way. The power, nothing new actually.

Siemer: What was your idea about the three lieutenant governor system? Would lieutenant governors run independently on each island?

Manglona: That's the idea. It would work better than the mayor here if we make that powerful because the governor is the Chief Executive Officer and the three lieutenant governors will be the assistants to the governor. One lieutenant in Tinian and one in Rota. We liked that lieutenant governor to be in charge in Rota. That's the idea. And then after that [the three lieutenant governor proposal] was not materialized, we thought the mayor should be given more authority. Although we have the provision that the governor "may" [delegate authority]. Remember that? I remember when you say "may", I don't forget that. But we won, and the governor should give power to the mayor. But the governor doesn't respect that and said, take me to court. We go to the court and we won. But even this one now, the governor is a stubborn man. Actually I feel that he's really got problems there even in the Constitution.

Siemer: That's the wording of Section 17 of Article 3?

Manglona: Yes.

Willens: If you have three lieutenant governors, in order to avoid a conflict between a governor and a lieutenant governor, wouldn't you want them to run on the same ticket, so that they would be of the same party? Otherwise you might have a lieutenant governor of a different party than the governor.

Manglona: Oh, our idea is to have our own separate ticket. Maybe the Governor and the Lieutenant Governors are connected. If there is the right connection, then the Tinian lieutenant governor will be the right hand of the governor whenever he left the island. But that would not preclude the governor to have his own party [candidate]. He can't select for Tinian. In the states sometimes the governor is Republican, the lieutenant governor is Democratic, right?

Willens: Right.

Siemer: Did the Tinian and Rota delegations try to persuade the Saipan delegates about your three lieutenant governor proposal?

Manglona: Well, we did, but it didn't work. So we left. I'm glad that at least Joe Cruz from Tinian left with us. How many left from Tinian because of Joe Cruz? Maybe Larry Diaz and Henry Hofschneider? I think two from Tinian or so.

Siemer: Steven King went out for a while.

- Manglona: Then he came back, no?
- Siemer: What about the proposal to abolish the municipal councils, how did you feel about that?
- Manglona: I agree with that. There is duplication of responsibility and we don't need too many government entities. We want to reduce the cost of government and let the local delegations gradually formulate the laws. Let the Rota delegation enact local laws by presenting resolutions to the legislature and review it. I think that we can safely do that. I disagree with forming municipal councils. Even up to now I disagree with that.
- Willens: Why do you think the idea of municipal councils came back in 1985?
- Manglona: It was political. The Constitutional Convention in 1985 was controlled by the Democrats, from Tinian especially. They wanted me to run, but I said no. I've got enough already.
- Siemer: Benjamin was in the legislature at the time so he couldn't run?
- Manglona: Oh yes.
- Willens: Why did the Democrats think that municipal councils were a good idea?
- Manglona: That came from Tinian only. Because Tinian I think at that time they got enough votes to control a municipal council, so they think it's good to reformulate so that they can have these positions.
- Willens: They thought the Democrats would win those elections for the municipal council?
- Manglona: Yes.
- Siemer: Back in the first Constitutional Convention, the formulation that your committee came up with for the lower house was sixteen from Saipan, two from Rota, one from Tinian. Then Ray Villagomez stood up and said no, I think we should have twelve from Saipan, one from Rota and one from Tinian. Do you remember that discussion?
- Manglona: Yes.
- Siemer: During that discussion, you and your colleagues decided to leave the Convention. Why did you walk out right at that point?
- Manglona: Well, we felt that if one person was unable to attend [a session of the Legislature], at least we have one [other representative] to take care then, to be sitting there, because it's important. So, at least we've got alternate. Not alternate, but at least somebody to watch the store. We say we should have two. And we tried to make that very strong there. That's the idea.
- Siemer: Your three senators would be there.
- Manglona: But [in the lower house] Saipan got twelve and we got one.
- Siemer: When did you decide that you were going to leave the Convention?
- Manglona: We have our chairman there, Benjamin. And the chairman's thing was to move in that direction. When we already decide that, we had to listen to our chairman.
- Siemer: Did the Saipan delegates try to persuade you to come back?
- Manglona: Well, we have communication with the Resident Commissioner Canham, and Frank Ada. Actually, if we go out and they [the other Rota delegates] follow us, there cannot be any more sessions [of the Convention].
- Siemer: So, what did you try to get done?

- Manglona: There was no way that we can compromise. If we move out, then they'll come [around on what we want with respect to the Legislature]. That's our bullet. What surprised us was the others [who did not walk out]. In the beginning they are with us, and I don't know why they changed.
- Siemer: Did you actually go home to Rota or were you still in Saipan for a while?
- Manglona: I think I was still in Saipan for a while. They looked for us around.
- Siemer: Once the Constitution was signed and there was going to be a plebiscite with respect to approval, was there any campaign here on Rota against the Constitution?
- Manglona: We say that most of the major protection was already there. And we had just a few more things we wanted, the lieutenant governors and the three members [of the house]. Another thing that satisfied us is the delegation of authority. Fortunately that we want to see.
- Siemer: To the mayor?
- Manglona: Yes, to our mayor. That's the area that we had to fight for if we are going to win that thing that we want to put it there and win that position of representative.
- Siemer: Did you think that the Constitution was more favorable than not, that it should be approved?
- Manglona: Actually, we thought that issue would die. People would not vote if we campaigned.
- Siemer: If you had campaigned, it would not have been approved here? But it was approved here by a fairly large vote?
- Manglona: But we did not campaign against it. We had most of the things we wanted and only two areas that I know where we didn't like it [the lieutenant governors and the single representative in the lower house.] Actually, our problem was that if one of the representatives is very weak, at least we should have another. Two can help, two heads can help.
- Siemer: Are there any other ways that the first Constitution did not work out well over the years?
- Manglona: It was a good thing the last Con-Con [amendments were] not adopted because they overhaul everything, and that would make it worse. And, as far as the document right now, it was made a little bit worse also by the second [Constitutional Convention]. This delegation of authority [to the mayor] is still an issue that affects us because the governor is very strong. The purse is controlled by the [central] government. When the budget is approved, the man says the budget for public health is like one million and they divided into quarterly [allotments]. But it does not mean that because you've got \$250,000 per quarter, that money already is effective. They play politics and we've got at least \$100,000. If we spend \$150,000, so we still only have \$100,000. I find out that is the problem, and you always say that not enough revenue. So, we have to wait because you reserve that portion until there's money available.
- Siemer: So, there are some problems in the Executive Branch provisions about how the budget works?
- Manglona: The thing is if the Governor wants to penalize one island, he can penalize that island. For example, I heard the mayor got his [allotment for] representation for \$25,000. He was to use that, but then I think the allotment became only \$1,000.
- Siemer: He's not going to go far on that.

- Willens: When were you first elected mayor?
- Manglona: In 1977.
- Willens: And you were the first mayor under the new Constitution?
- Manglona: Yes.
- Willens: Did you play an active role in the first campaign for governor when Joeten and Borja ran on the Republican ticket?
- Manglona: Yes.
- Willens: You supported that ticket?
- Manglona: I supported Joeten.
- Willens: Why do you think that ticket lost to the Democratic Party?
- Manglona: It's a very thin margin. Somebody made a very good strategy. They released documents that they named Joeten's [department] directors already and that made people a little upset. Also, somehow, some of his group lost last moment support when the typhoon came. I think there's a typhoon and they suspended the election. That gave the other party a chance to get support. The election should be held in November but they suspended it. I think they extended for another month or so.
- Willens: That gave the Democratic Party more time?
- Manglona: More time.
- Willens: Did Frank Ada have support on the island of Rota? Was he well-regarded here?
- Manglona: Actually, I supported him when he ran for governor [in the primary] but he lost. I don't know why. Then Camacho picked the Republican [as the lieutenant governor] he was running with.
- Willens: We have been exploring that a little bit and that's quite an interesting story about what Frank Ada did. I think that he might have been a stronger candidate than Joeten.
- Manglona: Well Joeten is a good man, nice person, but I'm much closer with Ada. He's my superior and asked for my vote in advance. Joeten's group came late and I admit that I like Joeten but because I committed myself, I said, "I want to be honest with you, but I already am committed to vote for Ada." So, they respected me, then after Frank Ada lose, and Joeten win I volunteered to support Joeten.
- Willens: The people elected a Democratic governor and lieutenant governor by a slim margin, but they elected overwhelmingly a Republican legislature in both houses in 1977. Did that have an adverse effect on the Commonwealth government in its first few years?
- Manglona: There's a lot of problems because of the new government. I think there was a bad experience during that time as mayor. They even turned me out from the office that the resident commissioner used to occupy. I was under the impression that I'm going to use that facility. So, former Governor Camacho asked Ben Santos to come to Rota and tell me that I had to move from that office, and I will continue to use the office of the mayor.
- Siemer: What did they want to use that office for?
- Manglona: They're going to formulate a governor's representative. So, that's the first problem we encountered. We took him to court on two occasions because the Governor's representative acted like the mayor had no authority, that it was just a ceremonial type [of office]. They have some sort of program. They don't invite me. They just do it through the liaisons here.

We win and the governor is even being instructed by the court to do this. Then he makes another position, budget and planning office. So he used that office again to intervene, to use all the powers of the Executive Government to instruct, direct the various government agencies in Rota. We took him to court on that also and we even sued the regional director here who is paying those people that are not confirmed by the [Legislative] delegation. We even demonstrate. Being the mayor I managed to control all the majority members. We know we still have to respect our governor, but I don't want anything to happen here. I won't redeem myself as a mayor if I cannot control my own people. So I managed to handle my own people. But in the area of validating my own responsibility, I always will support that. It was very expensive. Really, I spent a lot of money to support the lawsuits. My own family financed this court case during that time.

Willens: Mr. Manglona you've been very helpful. Is there anything you would like to say for the record about the last 20 years and how the Commonwealth has functioned under the Covenant and its Constitution, specifically with regard to Rota?

Manglona: Well, I am pleased that the Constitution was adopted to regulate the affairs of the Commonwealth and the various islands in the Northern Marianas and, in particular, for Rota. We have rules and regulations that we can follow to guide us in making decisions and to manage the problems and operations of the Executive Government in the most intelligent way and economical way to improve the development of the island. We have encountered many problems, many issues, differences of opinions, questioning authority and through this kind of communication there are some things that being remedied, there are some that are still going on and hopefully the future leaders will try to improve. But above all, I would like see that respect, mutual respect, should be managed within the Commonwealth. We have to respect each other and be bright enough to help improve the unfortunate islands to bring up their living standards using the power of the central government. Right now, we still have problems in expanding our public works facility. We have too many poor returning to the health center. Many roads need to be upgraded, paved. Our water system is improving every year and hopefully we'll complete all the extensions to reach out to the people who are living away from the water service. We have problems in power because our power system is about almost seven years old or ten years old and needs to be upgraded and get more capacity. We have only 2.5 megawatts in unit 5 and I think it's about time that we purchased new equipment. Now our most basic economic potential is the tourist industry. We have to look closely into this area. In order to enjoy the tourist benefit, we need to expand the runway so that bigger airlines can provide direct service from other countries to bring us tourists, to help us making more revenues in order to assist us in our future development of the island. To me, we need to think about the way we can handle the different styles of life here. Sometimes people feel that we can develop more hotels, but to some extent you have to see first whether we can handle it. In Saipan I know that there are plenty of problems. Although we make plenty revenue, there is the problem of alien workers right now. The central problem of the island of Saipan, it's overdeveloped. So, Rota is still a beautiful island and as much as possible, the people should put their minds together and make better plans for the future. We tried to develop the way we can meet the needs of all people. In a small place, the government should not to disturb the natural environment. We have to make our ocean clean, our land, the air and do the development as to need-by-need basis. There is a lot of talk about gambling. I think that will bring more crimes to the island. Why should we have gambling when our hotel development is very healthy? It is unfortunate some islands have different feeling, but for me as a resident of Rota, we don't need to see it. I like to see that Rota will be a very peaceful island where people from Saipan, Tinian and Guam

might use this as their sleeping place to hear the music of the bird, to hear that the air is silent, not too many noises. Then this could be their vacation place, which can benefit us if they have nice homes here using their own Chamorro people. We can preserve the Chamorro culture. We need also people that can help us in protecting our own culture, to respect our culture. We have Americans here but they are retired and I know they are very respectful with our culture. They even join us in celebrating our family fiesta. They want to be part of us and I hope that other people who are coming [in the future] will follow in this way, will try to respect our own culture and join us as much as possible with our lifestyle, not to the extent to change us, but just to fit in within our own style. The way I look at it, if we don't disturb some of our beautiful trees, that will be more attractive for visiting people from other islands. The sand and beach are not polluted. We need more hotels probably, but not to the extent of high rises. Maybe one, two major hotels and we can evaluate whether we need any more. I like to see that when we build a facility we provide employment opportunity to our people in the Marianas and probably we can recruit helpers from our neighboring islands, like Micronesia or from Guam or U.S. citizens. Too much of our revenues have been exported away because we depend on an outside labor force. So this has to be seriously studied by our leaders and the leaders in the future because the more we develop, the more problems we can expect. I try my best within my power as mayor in the past to see that the people be very respectful, welcome visitors, follow the tradition of our elderly persons, and keep Rota as much as possible, peaceful and a great place to live. This is a chance that everyone has to bring discipline and respect for visitors when they visit here. I don't want to see crimes here like what they are experiencing in the other islands the killings, stealing, different type of crimes. Rota is small place, it has a small population, and hopefully the development that we have will benefit us as well as other people in the Marianas who come to enjoy living in Rota. And, I would like to thank you now Howard and Deanne for taking the time to come to our place. I know this interview is based on my recollection, it's not perfect and my memory might be old but hopefully, when you edit this interview you'll put it in better perspective so that at least we have a record for the young generation to see the history in the past, as well as the present. Thank you very much.

Willens: Thank you.

Siemer: Thank you.