

INTERVIEW OF SAMUEL F. McPHETRES

by Howard P. Willens

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- Willens: Samuel F. McPhetres has been a student of the Northern Marianas and Micronesia in general for more years than he might care to admit. He has kindly consented to take himself away from writing a history book on Palau in order to help me understand better the Northern Marianas and where they came from and where they are going. Sam, could I begin by asking you to give me a little background information about your education and how you found your way out here to Micronesia.
- McPhetres: Well, that's a long story. I have a Masters degree in political science and linguistics from the University of Nancy in France and a B.A. from the University of California at Santa Barbara in political science. I went into the Peace Corps with the first wave in 1962 and was sent to Ecuador. I spent a couple of years there, then I taught in Washington, D.C.
- Willens: Were you right of school when you went into the Peace Corps?
- McPhetres: I dropped out of another Masters program to go into it, because it was just the right time for me at that point, so I joined. And then I came back. I taught at Cardozo High School.
- Willens: In Washington, D.C.?
- McPhetres: In Washington, D.C. in a program for returned Peace Corps volunteers. Then I went to the Ivory Coast with the Peace Corps again as a staff member and then to Somalia two years later.
- Willens: During that eight-year period of time or so, you were in and out of the Peace Corps?
- McPhetres: I was in the Peace Corps a total of eight years with the exception of two years in the program at Cardozo, but the reason I got out was because of the Russians in Somalia. The Russians backed a coup that assassinated the president in Somalia at that time. The Peace Corps was not very popular with the Russian-backed military regime since we spoke the language and had a pretty good idea of what was going on. Eventually we got thrown out. And I wound up in Truk because I still had time on my hands, and they figured if I survived Somalia, I could survive Truk.
- Willens: What year then did you find yourself in Truk?
- McPhetres: 1970.
- Willens: What kind of assignment did you have as a Peace Corps volunteer?
- McPhetres: As a Peace Corps volunteer in Ecuador, I was what they called a community development volunteer—one of those things where they drop you in and say, find something to do.
- Willens: By the time you reached Truk, did you have any different assignment?
- McPhetres: Well, by the time I reached Truk, I was no longer a volunteer. I was a staff member.
- Willens: I see.
- McPhetres: In fact, when I went to the Ivory Coast in Africa, I was staff, and I was responsible initially as the education specialist to help those volunteers who were working in the schools,

provide ongoing training to the volunteers. Then when I got to Truk, I was the Director for Truk.

Willens: How many volunteers did you have in Truk?

McPhetres: 140.

Willens: 140?

McPhetres: Which was at that point in time a gross overpopulation of volunteers.

Willens: I have seen some documents generated during the 1960s with respect to the Peace Corps program. The documentation is not complete, to say the least. There seemed to be some debate within the Peace Corps to exactly what the mission was in the TTPI.

McPhetres: Well, yes. There is always the devil theorists and the angel theorists. The devil theorists are using the Solomon Report as the reason for the volunteers to come out here to make the people more pro-American, eventually to choose a political status that was one that the United States could live with, and in general be a projection of the American way of life. The other side of the coin is that even if that were the intent, it worked just the opposite, because when the volunteers came out here, you have to remember it was the mid to late 1960s and Vietnam was becoming more and more unpopular. There was a great deal of backlash among the youth of the United States, and a lot of that feeling came out here with the Peace Corps. And coupled with the fact that there were a different class of Americans here, like contract workers, who were in essence being paid a full salary plus benefits to do the same work that the Peace Corps volunteers were doing for a small stipend and living out with the people. That created a friction that set the two groups of Americans very far apart in some places. So that the volunteer teachers did something that should never have been done if we were going to be pro-American. It taught the Micronesians how to think critically, as school teachers.

Willens: That's generally thought to be a plus.

McPhetres: Well, anywhere else it would be. Except here we were teaching democracy at a time when the Trust Territory was anything but a democracy, and people started thinking, you know, we should be doing more of our own thing.

Willens: A lot of the disputes involving the Peace Corps focused on the lawyers among the volunteers.

McPhetres: Right.

Willens: You're suggesting that the volunteers who were teachers also served an important function.

McPhetres: Oh, it's very, very important in its function. Yes. Very. I would say over the long haul, much more so than the lawyers. The lawyers got the focus because one lawyer, one Peace Corps lawyer, who was not too swift I think, if we were to put it that way, in the presence of a very high-ranking American general, made a critical remark about America's involvement in Vietnam. He was an advisor to a district legislature. The general left, and 48 hours later the lawyers program was cancelled.

Willens: I think I have seen some evidence of that.

McPhetres: Yes. And it was only after the Micronesians themselves put up such a stink about it that they were brought back in. And it was the Micronesian pressure that brought the lawyers back in and then provided legal assistance, or legal counsel I guess would be a better term,

- to all of the legislative bodies in Micronesia—the district legislatures, municipal councils and ultimately in 1965, the Congress of Micronesia.
- Willens: Now these were developments that occurred before you reached Truk in 1970?
- McPhetres: Before I got out here. Right.
- Willens: What's the basis for your information with respect to the Peace Corps program before you arrived?
- McPhetres: Well, before I arrived, I had to study what was going on previously. There were an awful lot of problems out here, and without knowing the background of it, you couldn't move ahead.
- Willens: Would you say that the situation as you saw in Truk was more or less comparable to what was being experienced in the other districts?
- McPhetres: No. No, each district was different. Very different.
- Willens: Were there significant differences between the Peace Corps program in the Northern Marianas as compared with Truk.
- McPhetres: Absolutely.
- Willens: In what respects?
- McPhetres: In the Northern Marianas, you had no outer islands. You had people you were working with who were already comparatively speaking well-educated, already in the Western economic mainstream, basically. The volunteers in Truk, most of them, had to work in isolated outer islands. The field trips came out once every three months if they were lucky, more often every six months to bring in the mail and the supplies and allow the volunteers to see a health aide or doctor, whatever happened to be on board that boat.
- Willens: I saw a report prepared in mid-1972 by the Peace Corps operation here in the Northern Marianas that analyzed the contributions that the volunteers in various areas of activity had been able to make. A quick reading of the document suggested that many of the volunteers were frustrated, there was a very high attrition rate, and many assigned to the Marianas felt that they had very little to do.
- McPhetres: They weren't in the real Peace Corps. The real Peace Corps was "out there."
- Willens: "Out there" meaning the outer islands in particular?
- McPhetres: Right.
- Willens: What was the role here then with respect to education and law.
- McPhetres: Well, they had the same role, but they had a different kind of clientele. I mean they didn't have to teach people how to read English first. They didn't have to teach them what the American way was, because they'd all come from Guam. They had this relationship with Guam. In Truk, for example, you couldn't find anybody at the level of the Chamorros on Saipan.
- Willens: In terms of their...
- McPhetres: In terms of their level of education, in terms of the economic outlook for the people themselves. They were still dealing in many respects with a I hate to use the word "tribal", but something along that line. The chiefs were still important. Islanders had to go along with custom. They had certain obligations to carry out. And these were frequently in conflict with what the American administration was attempting to do, simply by the

nature of it. I mean, you can't bring in a cash economy and expect people to barter. You have to somehow get the cash economy to dominate, or you don't have modern development. And this is what many of the problems were.

Willens: When you came out to Micronesia for the first time in 1970, did you become aware through your preparation or once you were here of some sense of the political status alternatives that the people here had to face?

McPhetres: Yes. See, the Congress of Micronesia had been set up in 1965. They had already determined by 1967 that they were going to pursue the free association option. So all of this had to be part of my orientation.

Willens: So you were well aware of the report of the Future Status Commission and the objective of free association or, in the alternative, independence?

McPhetres: Right.

Willens: Did you have any sense before you came out here as to whether there was a fixed U.S. view with respect to future political status and if so, what was it?

McPhetres: Yes, there was a fixed U.S. view, and it's anything but independence. I mean, you mentioned that word in Capitol Hill on Saipan or in any other U.S. element, and you are glassed in, I mean, you don't talk independence. That was one of the reasons the lawyers got into trouble, because they were giving people things to think about. That's the reason the teachers were having such an effect, by making the students understand there is something besides the Trust Territory. And these options include independence.

Willens: Well, you mentioned the Solomon Commission and its report earlier. Did you ever see a portion of it before a summary was published in unauthorized form in the Young Micronesian?

McPhetres: Yes. I saw it in Washington.

Willens: You did see it in Washington?

McPhetres: Yes.

Willens: Before you came out?

McPhetres: Yes.

Willens: And were you aware that it sort of followed what was called the National Security Action Memorandum that President Kennedy issued?

McPhetres: Well, yes, because he issued it. One of the things though that was made very clear was that the Solomon Report never became official policy. It was never adopted as the plan of action. However, a lot of things in it were adopted on an ad hoc basis.

Willens: Where did you get the impression, which was widely shared, that it was either never adopted as U.S. policy or did not in fact reflect existing U.S. policy even before the mission was established?

McPhetres: Well, there's been nothing to show that it has been. I've seen no directive, no presidential proclamation, nothing that says this is the course we're going to take. Now I have to say this about the Solomon Report: I think it is an excellent study.

Willens: We have interviewed two members of the Solomon group, and I have not interviewed Mr. Solomon, though he's alive and well, but I happen to share that view, and it was well received. But it was followed shortly thereafter by the assassination of President Kennedy

- and there are those who think and the documents reflect that at least the Interior Department was not enthusiastic about implementing it.
- McPhetres: Well, they made one major mistake with the Solomon Report. They should never have classified it. That fact by itself put a stamp of mystery on it and made it a kind of sex object. So that everything that's wrong is because of the Solomon Report. And if you read it, and it's an excellent study of the economic situation, one of the best analyses of the economic potential of what was in the Trust Territory I've ever seen. And I've made it my business. In fact, I just came from a meeting where we were talking about plans for the Northern Marianas. I brought a stack of plans that have been done. And the Solomon Report is by and large one of the best analyses that's ever been done. The fact that it was classified ruined it.
- Willens: Well, the goal of U.S. policy that was declared by President Kennedy and became the subject of internal agency wrangling was to in fact take a series of funding and other steps in the Trust Territory so as to prepare it for a plebiscite perhaps as soon as 1967 or 1968 with the expectation that the overwhelming majority of the Micronesians would vote for some kind of a permanent relationship with the United States.
- McPhetres: Well, they were offered commonwealth at that time.
- Willens: They were offered a so-called commonwealth in 1970.
- McPhetres: Yes. No, 1969. Actually, it was in 1967.
- Willens: Do you think that if it had actually been put to a vote as early as 1967 or 1968, do you think that the expectations of the U.S. would have been borne out, namely that the people would have voted for some kind of a relationship like Guam's?
- McPhetres: I don't think so.
- Willens: You do not think so?
- McPhetres: I don't think so. It would be close. This way or that; it could have gone either way. But I would say it would be very close, primarily for the most negative reason of all, and that is most people were quite satisfied with the status quo. And any change would be a threat to a very secure situation. This is one of the things that the Status Commission had to overcome throughout this whole process. And if that had been presented to them as a change in which they would no longer get all the benefits that they got under the Trust Territory, they'd have to start paying taxes, they'd have to start contributing to their own government and so forth, then I think they would have voted it down.
- Willens: Now assume with me for the moment that they had voted for some kind of unified relationship with the United States in the late 1960s. Do you think it would have survived what developed as a rather divisive set of circumstances in the 1980s?
- McPhetres: It's funny you should ask that. This is a study of 1946.
- Willens: Yes.
- McPhetres: The U.S. Commercial Company. It was set up by the Navy to go out and do an economic survey of Micronesia before the Trusteeship and lay out policies and directions for the American administration. And I just started reading that this morning again, because I was looking for Palau references. And in it it says basically that the United States should not attempt to enforce unity on Micronesia.
- Willens: Is that right?

- McPhetres: In 1946.
- Willens: I'm holding in my hands Volume I of a study conducted by the U.S. Commercial Company entitled "Economic Survey of Micronesia" published in Honolulu in 1946. The first volume seems to summarize the findings and make recommendations. And that was done at the request of the Naval Administration?
- McPhetres: Yes, the Navy was assigned the administration of Micronesia.
- Willens: Yes.
- McPhetres: It had not yet become a Trust Territory. And the University of Stanford had set up the SONA, School of Naval Administration. And one of the things that they came up with is a need to figure out how to revive the economic situation in the captured islands. So they sent a massive team out here consisting of economists and anthropologists and linguists and all this stuff, parallel to the CIMA program. CIMA is Coordinated Investigations on Micronesian Anthropology that came out here that was also part of the Naval civil administration, and they did this report, and it's excellent.
- Willens: Well, we'll come back to that. You did make reference to your understanding that some kind of commonwealth or Guam-like status was being offered . . .
- McPhetres: Actually, it's sort of closer to, yes, Guam-like . . .
- Willens: . . . to the Trust Territory before 1970. There was a visit by Secretary Hickel out here in May of 1969 at which he announced publicly in what was viewed as the first time that the United States did have an interest in a long-term permanent relationship with the United States. He was not more specific than that, although back in Washington there were people drafting a so-called organic act for Congress of Micronesia.
- McPhetres: A Joint Committee on Future Status was established in 1967.
- Willens: That's correct.
- McPhetres: And they went out, and by 1968, 1969, they had concluded their recommendations to go for something they called free association . . .
- Willens: That's right.
- McPhetres: . . . with four specific things. The U.S. panicked at that and came back and said, here's a commonwealth offer for you guys. And it was rejected in 1969 by the Congress of Micronesia.
- Willens: When did you come to Saipan from Truk?
- McPhetres: 1973.
- Willens: And in what capacity did you come here?
- McPhetres: As Agnes' husband.
- Willens: And she was at that point in the public school system?
- McPhetres: Yes. She was in the Education Department of the Trust Territory.
- Willens: Did you become employed in the Trust Territory government at that point?
- McPhetres: Yes. Public Affairs. My job initially was the education for self-government program. This was where the Public Affairs Department of the High Commissioner's office was required to provide public, impartial objective education on the future political status options to all of Micronesia, with the underlying theme that it would be—you know, the policy at that

time was the whole issue would be geared toward a unified Micronesia. And the options were commonwealth, free association and status quo. It was only later that we were able to get them to admit that independence was in fact an option. But we finally got that on the table, so we had those four options.

Willens: While you were in Truk, were you familiar with the Micronesian negotiations that were being conducted between the Joint Committee and Ambassador Williams?

McPhetres: Yes. They had some sessions in Truk. One of the most important sessions of the Congress of Micronesia took place in May of 1971 which followed Typhoon Amy, which was my first typhoon in Micronesia, and that's when the whole status issue really popped because you had the Marianas delegation pulling out or giving the appearance of pulling out, and you had the beginnings of the Marshalls and Palau starting to make noises. I knew all the negotiators; most of them were Trukese who were all either friends of mine or contacts in Truk, and that was Truk's delegation to the Congress of Micronesia and the Joint Committee on Future Status.

Willens: What was your assessment of the personnel of the Joint Committee?

McPhetres: Do you mean the staff or the people?

Willens: The members of the Joint Committee.

McPhetres: Oh, I thought they were first-class people. Yes.

Willens: And how well do you think they pursued the objective of free association?

McPhetres: Given what they had to work with, I think they did very well. I say that because things started breaking apart when the Marianas split.

Willens: The formal split from the Marianas was in April of 1972. There had been at least two years preceding that since the Joint Committee and the Congress rejected the commonwealth proposal ...

McPhetres: Right. And the Marianas said well, we still want it.

Willens: ...which the Marianas had made clear was closer to what they wanted. What was your assessment at the time during the 1972-1973 period about the underlying causes of that separatist effort in the Northern Marianas?

McPhetres: The key here I think in terms of Marianas separatism from the rest of Micronesia is the linkage to Guam. And the fact that the Chamorros of the Northern Marianas are for all intents and purposes the same people as the Chamorros on Guam. Families are linked up. They have shared experience under the Spanish period.

Willens: There are some who dispute that.

McPhetres: Oh, I realize that.

Willens: In terms of the different histories.

McPhetres: From 1898 you have a different history.

Willens: Right.

McPhetres: But the fact of the matter is, the Marianas was never as integrated into the Japanese system as Palau was, for example.

Willens: Yes. I don't understand that fully. The Japanese did colonialize Saipan in a very substantial way that many people here remember with some degree of affection.

- McPhetres: Right. But not to the degree as they did in Palau. I mean, the people here never stopped being Roman Catholic.
- Willens: But that was not the case in Palau?
- McPhetres: That was not the case in Palau.
- Willens: I see.
- McPhetres: You had a completely different set of identities. Palauans, in fact, in the Japanese period, you had the formation of the only indigenous religion in Micronesia the Modekngei.
- Willens: How do you spell that?
- McPhetres: M-o-d-e-k-n-g-e-i.
- Willens: And it's an indigenous religion?
- McPhetres: It's an indigenous religion.
- Willens: Developed in Palau.
- McPhetres: Yes. It basically developed as the Japanese put more and more pressure on the Palauans to give up their traditional customs, of all sorts. There was more and more feeling of reaction, and there were three Palauan men, one of them was apparently an epileptic and he fell down one day and he woke up with this—this spirit had visited him. And so they set up this group, Modekngei, which means to get together in Palauan, and they started promoting their Palauan identity, as opposed to the Japanese. One of the guys in fact was arrested by the Japanese and sent to a prison farm on Saipan. He died here, and his grave is over at the Catholic cemetery. Every year the Modekngei from Palau make a pilgrimage to come up here and pay their respects. There never was such a movement in the Northern Marianas.
- Willens: Never such a movement of
- McPhetres: Of anti-Japanese. But there was never a movement to become Japanese either. And you find in Palau, they enlisted in the Japanese Army as combat troops. That didn't happen here.
- Willens: Well, how about the reports you hear of animosity in Guam to the role that certain Saipanese Chamorros played in assisting Japanese forces?
- McPhetres: Right. And it's all true, although the numbers were very small.
- Willens: So you've identified the relationship with Guam as the key element. There seem to be some who emphasize very strongly the desire of the Northern Marianas to attain U.S. citizenship.
- McPhetres: Because of Guam.
- Willens: Well, what was it about Guam in your view that they thought was important?
- McPhetres: They're all Chamorros. Guam has a higher standard of living. I mean, we're talking the 1960s and 1970s now. Most of the people from Saipan who were in a position to do so sent their children to Guam to go to school. And if you look at the leadership around here, all of them went to Guam high schools.
- Willens: George Washington High School.
- McPhetres: Yes, exactly.
- Willens: A few of them went to Truk.

- McPhetres: Yes. To PICS, which later became PATS in Ponape, and then a lot of them went to Xavier in Truk.
- Willens: Well, my question is that some of the leadership here in the Northern Marianas did have shared educational experience with their colleagues from other districts, and I've asked some of them, why is it under these circumstances that you don't share some sense of Micronesian unity?
- McPhetres: Well, there you get into one of the great ambivalences of the Northern Marianas. The Carolinian community here, of course, was one of the most anti-Covenant groups because they were afraid that they would lose their connections with their homelands if the Northern Marianas became a part of the United States. And so they fought against adoption during the plebiscite in 1975. And in fact they paid dearly for that, because their meetinghouse was burned down twice. They had a lot of problems there. The Carolinians in general were fighting for a unified Micronesia. But the reason for that, to a large extent this goes back to the Spanish period. The Spaniards had so totally recultured the Chamorro people to the point where they were not able to identify with the Micronesians, the other Micronesians. That's a bad mistake we always make. It's they're Micronesians and we're Chamorros. It's not the case, but that's the way people view it. When you get a group of Micronesians together, and a group of Chamorros, there's always a separation because other Micronesians have a very deep sense of identity. They're Trukese. They have chiefs. They have family histories. They have land that's named after them. Everything meshes; it works. Chamorros lost all of their chiefs. They have no more traditional structure. What little they claim now is Chamorro is actually derived from the Catholic Church, its rituals, its laws, its canon law, and these are what are now Chamorro custom.
- Willens: Give me an example.
- McPhetres: Their wake. A nine-day wake. It's only here in all the system that they perform the wake the way they do. And I asked a priest about that, and he said well, back in the early days of the Spanish, they took a look at the custom, because everybody here is afraid of ghosts. And so they would have these ceremonies to keep the corpse down, the spirit down, so it wouldn't come up and play dirty tricks. The church came along and said hey, good idea, we'll take care of him for you, and we'll have a novena. Every four hours for 24 hours for nine days. That's the time it takes the spirit to go to purgatory and judgment and then he won't bother you any more. And that has now become one of the key issues, the key elements, of Chamorro custom. It's changed a lot now. It's not like it was when I first came here 20 years ago. There's been a lot of what's the word for it getting away from the church. It used to be a tremendous power. We had a neighbor, for example, when I lived up in San Vicente, who wouldn't do anything without having a priest consulted. In fact, he had a ghost chased out of his house, had it exorcised, when he first built it. And there's lots of this that goes on. But there are no more chiefs. And when you ask a Chamorro, you know, what are you? How can you define yourself? It's always in terms of the church. Roman Catholic. Well, you can go on and on this way.
- Willens: Well, although there were sometimes conflicting signals from the Congress of Micronesia or the Joint Committee, there were occasions when the Congress of Micronesia passed resolutions in opposition to the separate Marianas negotiations and declared that the Congress had the sole authority to represent all six districts in the negotiations.
- McPhetres: Yes. And that was U.S. policy, too.
- Willens: It was U.S. policy for a substantial number of reasons. Just to focus on U.S. policy for a moment, there are those who maintain that the separate Marianas negotiations reflected

a divide and conquer strategy by the United States. Do you have any judgment as to whether the separate negotiations did reflect a deliberate strategic move by the United States?

McPhetres: No. I think it was a very clever ploy on the part of the Marianas. Because the Marianas have been absolutely obsessed, since 1947, they've got resolutions passed to the United Nations Trusteeship Council, saying we want to be part of the United States. So it's not something that came out of the blue in 1969. It's something that has been brewing ever since the Americans took over the islands from the Japanese.

Willens: What do you think fostered the final decision of the United States to acquiesce in this request?

McPhetres: Because we wanted Tinian so bad we could taste it. And the Marianas people said, okay, sure. All you have to do is sign off on the dotted line. We'll give it to you.

Willens: What do you think about the true sentiment in the Congress of Micronesia? The sessions of the Congress in 1970 on for several years reflect growing issues within the Congress of Micronesia, particularly in disputes over revenue sharing ...

McPhetres: The income tax.

Willens: ... and so forth. Do you think that the Congress did stand any hope whatever of keeping all six districts together?

McPhetres: Looking back at it now, reading things like this, it didn't have a prayer.

Willens: But at the time when you were involved in self-government program?

McPhetres: At the time, I thought it was the only way the Micronesians could survive.

Willens: What was your thinking at the time?

McPhetres: None of these places were viable on their own. You know, from the market size, from the economy scale, they had to stay together. I mean, that was my own approach to it.

Willens: Was it your sense that they ought to stay together either as an independent entity or in free association with the United States?

McPhetres: Well that, I wasn't concerned about. But they had to stay together in order to be a negotiating power. I mean, instead of the U.S. negotiating with four relatively weak entities, as we used the term then, one Micronesian government would have a lot more authority. The problem came up again when the U.S. set the pattern by recognizing Marianas' right to negotiate separately, on the basis of economics, because the Marshalls said, hey, we've got Kwajalein.

Willens: The basis of economics in what sense?

McPhetres: Because if these islands remained unified, the revenues which are generated from the rentals for Kwajalein would be shared with everybody, and the Marshallese said, well, if the Marianas can have Tinian and keep the revenues from that, then we want to keep Kwajalein and the revenues from that. Palau was very high on the list of the United States military use rights, for 30,000 acres on Babelthup, and they said, ahh, we don't want to share that money. And so the only place that stayed unified was where the people didn't have anything, the central Carolines. If Ponape had developed a gold mine or found uranium ore or something, they wouldn't be in the FSM today.

Willens: Are there any other observations you would make about the separatist movements in Palau and the Marshalls apart from their desire to reap the benefits of the land in those

- districts desired by the U.S. military? Any cultural, educational differences between those districts and the Yap, Ponape and Truk that were important and used separate forces of action?
- McPhetres: You can go through and separate a lot of things. The Marshalls were way overpopulated and under-landed.
- Willens: Not enough land?
- McPhetres: Not enough land. It's a very, very poor place scattered over a lot of little atolls. The cultural system is much different, to start with. There's no private ownership. That's not unusual, but in the Marshalls, the high chief, owns the land, and nobody has land use rights without his approval, which means anybody comes out politically opposed to Amata Kabua, who happens to be the president right now, stands to lose his house.
- Willens: You think that still ...
- McPhetres: It's done.
- Willens: ... is a way of life in the Marshalls today?
- McPhetres: Oh, yes. It is. It's becoming more and more faded, but it has happened as recently as five years ago, that I saw, I mean I was aware of it. The Palauans are among the most educated Micronesians in the whole system—more Ph.Ds, more MAs, more everything in Palau than any other part of Micronesia. They were absolutely driven for education. And this has not been true in the other areas. Truk—what can you say about Truk? I mean you've got 50,000 people on 47 square miles of land.
- Willens: That sounds under-landed to me.
- McPhetres: It is under-landed. It's different from the Marshalls, though. The Marshalls doesn't have quite the same population. They have a little more land. But they're scattered way out. Trukese are concentrated in Truk Lagoon.
- Willens: If there had been a unified Micronesia, would the Truk population have given it a predominant role?
- McPhetres: That's one of the main fears.
- Willens: It was one of the main fears.
- McPhetres: Right. Truk with its greater population would have a higher electoral power, and they would rule. This is a problem right now for the FSM. The capital is in Ponape. But they have a lot of Trukese FSM government employees. And there's a lot of hostility between the Ponapeans and Trukese. And so there's talk now that the FSM may have a real major problem.
- Willens: You made reference to the session of the Congress of Micronesia that took place in Truk in May of 1971. In took place in Truk rather than Saipan in part because of the burning of certain Congress of Micronesia facilities in February of 1971. Do you recall having any reactions to that event and subsequent developments?
- McPhetres: Well, we were all horrified. I mean the whole idea of somebody actually doing something like that. It's so foreign to anybody's idea of what should be done or what could be done in Micronesia. Again, that's the kind of thing that could only happen in Saipan.
- Willens: Why was it that the Popular Party leadership, that was more or less in power in those days, had become so outspoken and given to dramatic action (without charging them

with arson)? What was it that you think precipitated in particular that kind of aggressive opposition?

McPhetres: How do I put it? It's very hard to answer that really. The nature of the animal of the Northern Marianas in those days was to do something dramatic, to do something with a flair to it. It wasn't long after that that they had a march on here to burn the TTPI Code in effigy.

Willens: Were you present at that event?

McPhetres: No. I wasn't on Saipan. There were a couple of similar events. The classic case was 1966 or 1967. I don't know the exact year. You had the first indigenous newspaper on Saipan. And it was the most God-awful mucksheet you've ever seen. I mean the *National Enquirer* is the *New York Times* compared to this thing. And it was run by one of the local politicians who was very high in the system at that time and became very important in the status negotiations.

Willens: Who was that?

McPhetres: Manny Muna. And he was writing things about the High Commissioner that were just blasphemous, and about the haole department heads and so forth. And it was being printed under the government press here as a generous gesture to promote the freedom of the press.

Willens: What happened?

McPhetres: Well, they had to figure out some way to get this guy under control, and so eventually I think they just said well, you'll have to pay to have the paper printed here. There is a file like this in our TT archives on that particular issue. But it's typical of the kind of things that people would do the flair for the dramatic. The burning the High Commissioner's house was another one.

Willens: The High Commissioner, that was Johnston at the time. What were his views with respect to these political status aspirations and negotiations?

McPhetres: Well, I can't speak too much for Johnston because I didn't have that much contact during the negotiating period with him. But I do know that there was a real line of demarcation between the administration of the Trust Territory, which was the High Commissioner's job, and political status negotiations, which was OMSN. And they were not overlapping.

Willens: There was an effort to get the TTPI Administration involved from time to time on matters that did have consequences for serious negotiations. You made reference to the education for self-government program.

McPhetres: Yes. But that's not the same thing. We were divorced from the negotiations. My office had nothing to do with it. All we could do is hope that they would feed us news and information about which way the negotiations were going. But as a member of the ESG, we had a mandate set out by the law of the Congress of Micronesia and by, I guess it was a High Commissioner's proclamation I think that set up the organization.

Willens: You went to a meeting in Honolulu in either late 1972 or . . .

McPhetres: 1972, I think it was.

Willens: Because there was a great concern of the need for political education. Just to stay with that for a minute, I happened to be looking at some documents that bear on the period of the early months of 1974. At that time, the Marianas Political Status Commission was out conducting hearings in the villages trying to explain what commonwealth was and where

it was headed with respect to the separate negotiations. The program you made reference to under TTPI auspices had a different mission.

McPhetres: No. We were told to stay out of the Marianas.

Willens: Well, the documents reflect considerable confusion, both within the citizens view, or maybe even more important, back in the United States in OMSN, as to what was going out here with respect to political education. Do you have any recollection as to how your program was supposed to take account of what was going on in the Marianas?

McPhetres: Well, the basic issue, once it was determined that the Covenant was going to be negotiated, then the—I'm trying to think of actual dates here.

Willens: The Covenant was signed in February 1975.

McPhetres: 1975, I know. And it was after that that the ESG program was given instructions not to operate in the Northern Marianas.

Willens: How about the preceding 18 months?

McPhetres: Preceding 18 months, we treated the Marianas as if it was any other district, and we had the same programs available here as we had in Truk or Yap or Marshalls. And that made some of our people, especially the Marianas negotiators, unhappy because they wanted only the one option presented to the people. They didn't want any other options.

Willens: But you were obligated to administer a Territory-wide program under some direction from the Congress of Micronesia?

McPhetres: Yes. Congress had passed a law outlining the directions that the ESG program would go, and that's what we did. And the Marianas were still a part of the Congress of Micronesia at that time.

Willens: That's right. Do you remember any discussion with respect to whether the Marianas should be separated off from the remainder of the Trust Territory given its different status aspirations?

McPhetres: At what time are you talking about?

Willens: In approximately the 1974-1975 period, both before the Covenant and after the Covenant. As it happened, there was not separate administration until after Congress approved the Covenant. For many years previous, there was discussion about it.

McPhetres: Yes. There was discussion about it. And there was a lot of confusion about it. It finally came down to the point where the United States said, we must keep the Marianas in until they confirm through the plebiscite which direction they would go. For this reason, the Marianas participated, although very lackadaisically, in the constitutional convention of 1975. Following the June 15 plebiscite on the Covenant, there was a TT election, and because we didn't know if the U.S. Congress was going to buy this, we had to go ahead as if the Marianas was continuing as a part of the whole process. But it wasn't until 1976, when the U.S. Congress actually approved the Covenant, the process went ahead to separate the Marianas administratively from the rest of the Trust Territory.

Willens: You think there were any adverse consequences to keeping the Northern Marianas as part of the Trust Territory for all purposes until that point in time?

McPhetres: There had to be.

- Willens: It would have been possible for the Secretarial Order to have been modified without terminating the Trusteeship to let the Marianas be administered separately from the other five districts isn't that true?
- McPhetres: No, I don't think so, not then. See, they didn't have a constitutional government until 1978.
- Willens: Right. The issue that was presented in many discussions between the Marianas Political Status Commission and the U.S. delegation was whether one should try to avoid the complications emanating from the Congress of Micronesia, particularly with respect to the Constitutional Convention, by amending the Order so as to limit the Congress of Micronesia's power with respect to the Marianas in certain areas. Nothing came of that ultimately for all sorts of reasons, and for the consequences I think that were feared. Do you remember some discussion along that line?
- McPhetres: All I can remember right off-hand is the question of—maybe this isn't going to go for the Marianas. We have to keep them in until such time that the decision is final and non-reversible. The Congress of Micronesia, of course, had its own feelings on this. They were very resentful at how the U.S. had split off the Marianas administratively under Erwin Canham right after the U.S. Congress approved the Covenant. And he became the Resident Commissioner. They saw this also as a loss of revenue for Micronesia because they could no longer tax the Commonwealth as of, what was that, April of 1976 it became effective. I liked that because an actual proclamation separating the Marianas was on April Fools Day. But they put it on March 27 to avoid, the ceremony was on March 27 to avoid that connection. Oh, there's another thing that you might want to keep in mind, the fall of Saigon.
- Willens: When was that?
- McPhetres: That was in 1975. And at one point, there was a military decision to relocate 20,000 Vietnamese refugees to Tinian.
- Willens: I haven't come across that yet.
- McPhetres: No, and you probably won't. But it happened. And in fact it got to the point where it's when they're moving them through Guam that they brought up some very high-level Vietnamese refugees and they put them down at what's now the Hyatt for a fair amount of time at government expense.
- Willens: The Hyatt on Guam?
- McPhetres: The Hyatt here on Saipan. Some wiser head, I won't name who, said, "Well, if you bring in 20,000 Vietnamese and there's only 10,000 indigenous people, they're not going to be very happy. And the vote on June 15 might not go in the right direction."
- Willens: When you came over to Saipan in 1973, you have recalled for me that you did have certain views with respect to trying to keep the districts together. Would you say that that was a view generally shared by the TTPI Administration?
- McPhetres: Oh, absolutely. Well, we had promised, we had told the U.N., for example, that we will terminate for everybody. It's one entity. And we went as far as we could until it became ridiculous to be saying that, and then we would say well, there will be no unilateral termination of any one area until everybody is ready to terminate. So yes, it was official policy.
- Willens: What was your sense of the competence of the TTPI Administration as you came to be in a position to form a judgment about it?

- McPhetres: Well, I think the TT Administration is badly maligned in many areas. I think there were some extremely competent people who were both here and in the districts. The unfortunate thing is that nobody in the States cared about the TTPI unless they were directly somehow linked up. And so you had this revolving door all the time. People come in for two years on their contract, finish their contract, and they'd go.
- Willens: Why wouldn't people stay longer? The Micronesians, including the Marianas people, do find it easy to criticize the expatriates in part because of their differential pay scales, but also because of their perceived reluctance to train Micronesians to assume high level duties.
- McPhetres: Yes. You get into some really kind of nebulous areas there. In the first place, I mean I was directly affected by this whole process, because I worked for 20 years for the TT, but there is no retirement because it was never meant to be a career. The Trust Territory was going to be terminated.
- Willens: Do you get credit against any retirement plan?
- McPhetres: No. Nothing.
- Willens: So what were the consequences of that?
- McPhetres: Well, the consequences of that were a few other people, like myself, when September 30, 1991 rolled around, and we locked the door of the Trust Territory office on Saipan, we're out. The failure I think lies in Washington's refusal to accept that they are a colonial government and need to train people to serve in a colonial government until such time as that colony no longer is a colony. So we've had a lot of good people come through. A lot of dumb ones, too. I mean we had a major disaster out here back in 1959 when Alaska became a state. Because they had a whole bunch of Civil Service people in the federal government administering this Territory of Alaska, and the ones they couldn't find placement for they sent out here. That was the joke of the time. I have lived in Alaska at that time. I was there. I know. So you've got a lot of incompetents, too, who knew, the ones who survived their incompetence knew that nobody cared in Washington what you did out here.
- Willens: Well, now you had under various names something called the Office of Territorial Affairs of the Interior Department. Is it your sense that office did not keep in touch with the TTPI Administration?
- McPhetres: I would have to go back and check when the first equivalent of that office was established. I really don't know. But I don't think it parallels the existence of the High Commissioner.
- Willens: You may be right. I know there actually was a Guamanian, Richard Taitano, who I have not met who was there in the early 1960s. Some of the comments I've seen attributed to him and heard about seem very far-sighted. In any event, he was succeeded then by Ruth Van Cleve, who's been in and out of government service for forty years. Did you have any dealings with Ms. Van Cleve?
- McPhetres: I just met her in passing. We never had any close contact.
- Willens: Well, did you form a judgment about the Office of Territorial Affairs during the years that you were here at the TTPI?
- McPhetres: Oh, sure. I hated them most of the time.
- Willens: Why was that?

McPhetres: It's the same kind of thing. Let me give you an anecdote. When I was in Truk as Peace Corps Director, we hated Saipan, the Headquarters, the Peace Corps. Because they never gave us what we wanted. They never supported us. And they were always down our necks for doing something they said was wrong. Constant friction going on between the field and the headquarters. So one day my Peace Corps doctor and I decided by God, we're going to teach those guys a lesson. In those days, they were closing down the U.S. military base on Okinawa. So the doctor, as part of the American system out here, we were getting these catalogues of excess military equipment. And you had those little spindle cards, do not bend, fold or . . .

Willens: Mutilate.

McPhetres: . . . mutilate. And these things came with a catalogue. All you had to do was mark off a number and send it in. Eventually you had to pay the freight charges from Okinawa to wherever you were. So we got this catalogue, filled out one of these cards, sent it to Saipan for clearance, because they had to stamp it "funds available." And I had been on their backs, on their cases, for their non-support. "Well, let's let him do it this time." They hadn't even looked it up. They stamped it "funds available." Sent it on to Okinawa. The doctor and I were sitting there, looking at each other for six months, saying, when are they going to laugh? When are they going to cry? When are they going to do something? So one day, I'm watching outside the Peace Corps office, I see two C130s circling Truk Airport. And the phone rings. It's Saipan. "Sam, do you know what you ordered? A \$3 million MASH unit. Complete with surgical everything. And we don't think we can stop it." And I thought, my God, it's on those planes. Fortunately, that was a CB resupply flight. It was not my hospital. And we managed to stop the hospital from getting here. But the whole thing between the field and headquarters and the same thing goes on between Saipan and Washington. When Winkel was High Commissioner, he couldn't even talk to Washington without burning up the telephone lines. In fact, I almost got fired one day for giving the phone to him without telling him it was OTIA on the line in New York when we were there for a U.N. session. I mean, he just could not stand those guys.

Willens: Did that reflect his Congressional background?

McPhetres: Probably. Very much so. But, you know, Washington and the status people were going in opposite directions from where he wanted to go.

Willens: In what respect?

McPhetres: Well, who was it? Oh, it was Zeder. Zeder was head of the negotiations at that point in time.

Willens: The Marianas is a done deal at that point.

McPhetres: The Marianas is a done deal. What it was, oh, yes, the second-level CIP. The Micronesians were negotiating to have what they called a second-level CIP, a program that would bring infrastructure development to the outer islands. They wanted this as a part of the Compact. And Zeder was negotiating this. At one of the opening sessions of a round of negotiations that took place here, Winkel was there as an honorary guest, and he said, there will be no second-level CIP. And he hadn't cleared it with Zeder. He hadn't cleared it with anybody. And all hell broke loose. But that particular regime was probably the bitterest and the darkest of the TT period.

Willens: How were the relationships between Ambassador Williams on the one hand and the TTPI on the other hand?

McPhetres: From what I can recall of that session, they were pretty good.

- Willens: There was considerable effort made by him on at least one occasion that I've been recently reviewing to involve the District Administrator and the TTPI in matters that had some impact on status and some impact obviously on the Administration of the Trust Territory. Was there resentment within the TTPI Administration that the status negotiation function had been taken away from the High Commissioner?
- McPhetres: I think there was a little bit of that, yes.
- Willens: The differential in pay scale is a recurrent complaint among peers. What was your sense at the time as to its legitimacy?
- McPhetres: Let's put it this way, and I have to say that I agreed with the TT policy at that point. The whole background of that was based on the premise that if Micronesia were to become self-supporting, it would have to be with a salary level that they could live with based on available resources, and therefore to artificially raise the indigenous salaries to that equivalent to an American who has been recruited because of special skills, has been brought out into what was considered frequently a hardship post, who had no longevity in the system, is simply apples and oranges. Now also and a more questionable aspect of this is, and actually is valid anywhere but Saipan I think, that the Micronesians had other sources of income from their land, from their farms, from other activities that they could engage in, and therefore it would have been wrong for the United States to have equal pay for equal work, as terrible as that sounds, when in fact it would create an artificial expectation that they would not be able to live up to when and if the U.S. pulled out. That's the rationale behind it. Now you can argue all you like whether it's a good one or not, but that's what it was.
- Willens: Was there a responsibility that TTPI officials had at the time you were there to train a Micronesian replacement?
- McPhetres: Oh, we had Micronization programs coming down the pipeline every day.
- Willens: And did they work out to anyone's satisfaction?
- McPhetres: No. The specific training programs did not work out very well. What did work out is competent Micronesians rose to the top. You had people like Lazarus Salii. You had people like Dwight Heine, David Ramarui, John Sablan, who rose to the top. They became departmental directors in the TT with all the same authority that any U.S. type had in those roles. They became members of the High Commissioner's cabinet.
- Willens: Do you think competence was rewarded among aspiring Micronesians to the same extent that it was among Statesiders?
- McPhetres: Yes. The only difference was they weren't paid as much. My problem, see, I have a personal involvement with that, too. Because when I came out here, I was married to a local. I was hired in Saipan. I was a local hire, which meant I didn't get the same money a contract person did either. My salary was down there right with the Micronesians.
- Willens: It was?
- McPhetres: Yes. For about ten years.
- Willens: That should have given you some sense of empathy with your Micronesian colleagues.
- McPhetres: It did, yes. But the other thing to keep in mind, and this is very important, the Congress of Micronesia had many, many chances to change that, and they didn't.
- Willens: Change what?

- McPhetres: The pay scales.
- Willens: They did not?
- McPhetres: They did not. Because for the same reason they thought well, gee, how are we going to pay these people if we raise their salaries? Where are we going to get the money?
- Willens: Well, there are two sources—the United States Congress and local taxes.
- McPhetres: Well, they had their own taxes. Most of that went to salaries.
- Willens: When you came to Saipan, did you become informed about the Marianas negotiations?
- McPhetres: Well, they got started when I first got here.
- Willens: When was that?
- McPhetres: 1973.
- Willens: Early 1973?
- McPhetres: Early 1973, yes.
- Willens: Do you remember the *Pacific Daily News* blaring forth in a big headline that the Navy was seeking all of Tinian? It happened at what was the second round of the Marianas negotiations in May 1973. Up to that point, the United States, although evidencing repeatedly an interest in Tinian, had never spelled out the details of what it had in mind. When the details hit the press, there was clamor and considerable dissent. Do you have any recollection now of your own feelings at the time as to the nature of that U.S. request?
- McPhetres: I can't recall anything at this time. What I do recall was that it was always assumed that Tinian would be the key linchpin of this whole program. It was basically uninhabited. There were only 300 or 400 people on it. It's empty. And the people who were there are not original inhabitants of Tinian. They're all Yapese Chamorros. And so, yes, why not talk about all of Tinian? It's not unreasonable. It was only afterwards that the negotiating process took place and the U.S. was restricted to two-thirds of the island.
- Willens: And then there were a few other issues as well. Did you come to some judgment at the time the Covenant was signed as to what kind of a deal would be fair for the United States on the one side and the Marianas on the other?
- McPhetres: Oh, I thought the Marianas got screwed.
- Willens: You thought the Marianas got screwed?
- McPhetres: Absolutely.
- Willens: In what respect?
- McPhetres: Well, you boil it down to \$1 per acre per year. That's their lease payment.
- Willens: You're talking about the approximate \$20 million lump sum for 100 years?
- McPhetres: Yes. It boiled down to \$1 per acre per year.
- Willens: In your judgment, the Marianas should have held for a much higher price?
- McPhetres: A much higher price, yes.
- Willens: Do you think the United States would have been willing to pay more money?
- McPhetres: At that point in time, I certainly think so, because we were being hit real hard in Vietnam, they were talking about throwing us out of Subic Bay, with Clark Air Force Base and

- Korea [also possible problems]. Jim Berg, said the arc of defense was from the Marianas down through Tinian, Guam and then down into Palau. That was going to be the U.S. line, the defensive line of the United States.
- Willens: What other aspects of the negotiating deal do you think deserve mention as falling short on either side?
- McPhetres: Well, I'm not too sure. My biggest problem is what happened after, which led to what is now some very strong feelings of bitterness on the part of the Chamorros who feel betrayed, feel taken in some respects. And one of these things was the time it took between 1975, 1976 and 1986 to realize what they were just really after in 1975.
- Willens: Which was U.S. citizenship.
- McPhetres: Yes. And then when it happened, it happened all wrong.
- Willens: In what respect?
- McPhetres: I've had a long talk with Ambassador Williams on this one, and he agrees now. On the night of November 2, 1986, the people of the Northern Marianas went to bed Trust Territory citizens. The morning of November 3, they woke up U.S. citizens, and nothing had changed. There was no ceremony, there was no swearing-in, there was no flag, I mean there was no impact of what this meant. And to this day, if you ask a Chamorro or Carolinian to fill out a form that says "nationality," they will say Chamorro or Carolinian. They will not say "Americano," the name for white people. I taught citizenship classes up at the college, and invariably they will not say, I am an American. I am a Chamorro, Carolinian, I have a U.S. passport. But that doesn't make me an American.
- Willens: Do you think that might have been influenced by some more astute handling of the critical event in 1986?
- McPhetres: Yes. The problem there goes back to why it was done at that point in time.
- Willens: You know why it was done, because of the limitations imposed by the Trusteeship Agreement.
- McPhetres: No. No, that isn't why it was done.
- Willens: Why do you think it was done?
- McPhetres: Because our base rights on Kwajalein are running out, and if the Compact had not been put in place, we would have lost Kwajalein or had to renegotiate for a higher rent. And in order to do this, this is why if you look at the Proclamation, it's effective three days earlier in the Marshalls than it is in the FSM and the Marianas. But they had to do it in May 1986. The Trusteeship Council passed a resolution saying the Marshalls, FSM, the Marianas, are ready for termination. And they set a date of November 1 for the U.N. to do that. Well, the U.N. didn't act. And we had that thing hanging on the wire in Kwajalein.
- Willens: What was hanging on the wire?
- McPhetres: Our lease. And they had just finished a major, major sit-in that lasted for months, where the people from Ebeye went in and blocked all the activities on Kwajalein. In fact, High Commissioner McCoy was sent into exile down there for several months as the TTPI representative through all this stuff, and she had to live on Kwajalein, and she was absolutely furious about that. But that's the reason it was done at that point in time.
- Willens: That's the reason the Trusteeship was terminated?

McPhetres: No, no. The Trusteeship was not terminated. The application of the Trusteeship Agreement to these three jurisdictions was lifted. Termination did not take place until December 3, 1991, when the Security Council officially acted.

Willens: There are two conflicting views about that.

McPhetres: I know. For all practical purposes, it was terminated in 1986.

Willens: Your statement assumes and may be correct, that you can't really have termination until the United Nations through the Security Council so declares.

McPhetres: That's right. That's what the Trusteeship Agreement says.

Willens: There is a lot of negotiating history to support that.

McPhetres: Yes. Well, it says so. There can be no changes to the Trusteeship Agreement without the concurrence of the Security Council. That was written in 1946 in order to protect the American interests that could not be terminated by the Trusteeship Council which would only require a majority vote. Since the U.S. had a veto on the Security Council, nothing could be done without U.S. approval. That's why they put it in there.

Willens: Going back to your point about citizenship, however, it was the position of the United States government in 1986 that the Trusteeship Agreement or its application had been terminated with respect to the Marianas, so U.S. citizenship which had not been made available until that time occurred, was now in place. There are those who have told me exactly what you have, that people here basically don't regard themselves as Americans. Some go on to say, don't forget, they've only been Americans for seven years, and when they play their own national anthem, following the unsung Star Spangled Banner, one begins to understand the place a little bit more. What in your sense ought to be done, if anything, to address that particular situation?

McPhetres: Well, there's one other thing you need to keep in mind, and that is, there is a very definite manifestation of the grass is greener syndrome. Now you remember the negotiating days, the Marianas said, we're not going to make the same mistakes Guam made. And the FSM and the free association people would say, we're not going to make the same mistakes the Marianas did. Well, now it's just the reverse. The Marianas is looking at the FSM and saying, hey, those guys have their 200 mile EZ [Economic Zone]. That's what we really meant when we negotiated the Covenant. We have the right to our 200 miles. Hey, those guys can sell fishing licenses. Why can't we? There's a distinction; this is a part of the United States. Or is it? Now, there's a definite movement on the part of certain leaders here (this is not broadly understood, because most of the people couldn't care less anyway), but there is a feeling in certain sectors that really the Marianas would have been better off negotiating its own free association and it should in fact go back now and reinterpret the Covenant so that it's more in tune with a Compact than a Covenant and permanent union with the United States.

Willens: What do you think prompted this revisionist effort which dates from about 1985 or 1986?

McPhetres: Most of those are the ones who have closer relationships with the FSM and Palau.

Willens: You do think that putting the EZ aside for the moment . . .

McPhetres: Well, that's only one example.

Willens: I know, but it's a good example.

McPhetres: Embassies and consulates are another one.

- Willens: Do you think people here generally feel that they're better off or less well off than their counterparts in the Marshalls and the Federated States?
- McPhetres: Most of them feel like they're better off, but that's not enough.
- Willens: Better off in terms of employment and health and education may not be enough?
- McPhetres: Yes. It's not enough.
- Willens: Why is it not enough in their view?
- McPhetres: Well, because there's something else out there that we could have. The battle, for example, over the control tower at the Saipan International Airport. It's a classic example. What was it, ten years ago? It was at the U.N. actually. There was this thing that the Marianas would say, God, we need to have a control tower. You're getting two flights a day, you know, what do you need a control tower for? It was all being managed out of Guam. So the Japanese delegation comes into the Trusteeship Council, says, Hey, we'll build you a control tower." The Americans said, "No you don't. You can't do that. The Marianas are part of the United States cannot accept foreign aid." So the Marianas gets all in a huff and says, Hey, why can't we accept foreign aid? You're not giving us what we want; we'll go somewhere else and get it."
- Willens: Well, stepping back from it though, I appreciate what you just said about the phenomenon of finding something always more attractive about the more distant status. What in your sense are the principal successes here?
- McPhetres: Successes in what?
- Willens: Successes in political or economic development. Comparing this place now with what it was like when you came and lived here in the middle 1970s, what is your sense of that?
- McPhetres: Well, okay. Basically, in a physical sense, people are much better off. Their homes are better, the infrastructure is better, the hospital is better, but the quality of life has gone downhill. And that's a real major problem. You have 300 people at CHC as a voluntary detox from [the drug] ice. That could mean up to 3,000 people out there who are users. They say one in ten who voluntarily turns himself or herself in. The ice problem has become endemic.
- Willens: Are there any causes for that?
- McPhetres: Social breakdown. We did this study. I've been very active with the Chamber of Commerce here for the past several years, and I am chairman of the economic development committee. We sponsored a series of, I don't know what you'd call them, symposia, I guess, on various aspects of the economic situation here, and one of the things was the social breakdown of families. And it's getting to be a major, major problem, the fact that everybody can have a Filipina maid who takes care of the children. So you have a two-income family, but the person who is taking care of the kids is not part of the family.
- Willens: The maid is taking care of the kids.
- McPhetres: Yes, but the maid doesn't know anything about this. And as one person described it the other day, the maid says "no" to the kid. You can't have any more candy. So mama comes and the kid whines. The maid gets punished. So she says, okay, the kid gets all the candy he wants.
- Willens: And to some extent, you think that this phenomenon is motivated by the desire to have both husband and wife working?

McPhetres: It's an endless circle. The cost of living here is so high that you almost have to have two incomes to support a family. To do that, you have to have somebody to take care of the kids.

Willens: It's not an unusual problem in the yuppie community back in the continental U.S.

McPhetres: But that's the point. People don't see this as a yuppie community. They see this as a poor, poverty-stricken place where the people have to work hard just to make ends meet.

Willens: And that's not an accurate picture.

McPhetres: No, no, I mean there's more money here than [many places in the U.S]. You look around at the quality of the homes, the cars, the number of luxury cars on the road. There are not as many as there were three or four years ago at the peak of the land boom, when you had Mercedes coming out your ears all over the highways. But there's still enough \$40,000, \$50,000 vehicles out here to make you wonder.

Willens: You've touched on very critical issues with respect to quality of life. Are there other aspects of the quality of life here that are of similar importance?

McPhetres: Oh, yes, sure. You have the fact that the population breakdown of the Northern Marianas is now, speaking of legal residents, 44,000 people, of whom officially there are 24,000 non-resident workers. Actually it's closer to 30,000. Which means the indigenous population is now a minority. There are two factors here. One is the non-resident population, and the other is the fact that our brilliant Legislature has determined that all employers of 50 or more people should be forced to have a quota of local hires. On the face, it sounds like a reasonable idea. You should require the hotels and the garment factories to hire locally. The problem is, there isn't anybody to hire. It's not a question of work ethic or anything like that, although that's another factor. The warm bodies aren't there. There are 5,000 employees in the garment industry. There are, what was it, I forget, 10,000 people in the service industry. And you have a labor pool of the Northern Marianas of 6,000 people, 4,000 of whom are government workers. So they're just not there.

Willens: I understand the Micronesians from other districts are eligible.

McPhetres: Well, that is why we're having this problem. The government said we have to have 20% by 1993. The 20% isn't here. So what do we do? We label citizens of the Freely Associated States and TT as local hires. This allows the garment factories to go to Truk and recruit, and because of the Compact, they can bring their families. They're unrestricted. They come in, and they can get a job in a garment factory. The garment factories don't care about the Trukese employee. All they need is his name on a roster so they can begin to fill the quota. And so they're not employed. They have jobs, but they're not employed doing anything. So you have an increasing number of people coming in to take those positions, to fill the quotas, those are being encouraged. But because they are local hires, they're not entitled to housing. And because they're not U.S. citizens, they're not entitled to food stamps. So you have a growing underclass of Micronesians. They figure there's 2,000 Palauans here, and at least that many Trukese, maybe more, and a growing population of Ponapeans. And these are undocumented in the sense that we don't know how many they are, so when they go to the hospital, the hospital hasn't budgeted for these people. When their kids go to school, the teacher to student ratio planning did not include these people, because nobody knew they were coming. So you have an overburdened school system, you have a hospital situation which has improved, I have to say in the past year, I guess, but you have a situation here where the ethnic frictions are becoming much, much stronger. And you combine this with the drugs, and I had the drug unit come to my class at the

college a few months ago and say, look, there have been three murders here in the past year. All of them were aliens—two Filipinos, one Japanese. None of them were robberies. All were related to drugs, because these kids, basically that's what they are, under 25 most of them that have been arrested for this, get high, they can't go to sleep, so they cruise and do alien bashing. They see some poor guy walking home from his late-night shift at the hotel and get out and beat the hell out of him. And there's a lot of that going on. A lot of cases where a barracks will be stoned by our local youth because they're making too much noise having a birthday party or something. And you can go on and on and on. The situation is really grim in the terms of quality of life. And I'm speaking from a very personal point of view as well because I've got two kids involved in this stuff. And it isn't healthy.

Willens: Well, the economic development here is dependent to a very large measure on the alien labor.

McPhetres: Which comes first? The chicken or the egg? And whenever we have this discussion, and we have it a lot lately, development for whom? And how much is enough? Now we have the Marianas Visitors Bureau saying we need at least 4,000 more hotel rooms by next year. The 4,000 hotel rooms means 8,000 more employees, because each room needs two employees. That's not to mention the disaster that will happen if Tinian actually goes for casinos because there you have seven jobs per hotel room. And the minimum casino hotel is 300 rooms. So there's 2,100 people at a minimum to go to Tinian.

Willens: You said, development for whom and how much is enough?

McPhetres: Yes. You going to pave over the island?

Willens: Who makes these judgments? They're typically made by the people through their elected representatives.

McPhetres: Well, we in the Chamber group which I've been involved with are pressing very hard, in fact, we just finished three major studies on the economic, social and capital situation in the Marianas. One was, how much capital is available and how is it being used, some of the social problems caused by this rapid development we've had, and what is the real labor situation? A very well-done report.

Willens: Can I get a copy of those?

McPhetres: Yes. They're available actually at the Chamber of Commerce office. We did a land report that some of the Board members of the Chamber were upset that took a position that wasn't the same as Ted Mitchell's, so that never got approved by the Board. But it's a very good report.

Willens: Well, the question is who makes the decisions?

McPhetres: We've taken a position that the government has got to set up a planning office with statutory authority which could then draw on all the resources like the Chamber of Commerce and like the education system and everything else, and come up with some kind of a statement that the island can only handle 5,000 hotel rooms. I mean we got the water, power, sewage, waste disposal, and the whole thing about our solid waste disposal right now is criminal. And that's another one involving our friend Mr. Hillbloom.

Willens: How so?

McPhetres: He owns UMDA. UMDA owns the property or leases the property in Marpi.

Willens: Which is supposed to be developed as a landfill?

- McPhetres: UMDA agreed to build and manage the landfill in return for an additional 15-year lease on their property. And they got the lease, but the Legislature appropriated—I would put it took—the money that UMDA was paying to build the landfill and put it to the general fund. It's very convoluted. But the last word I had is that nobody's going to be able to do anything out there for a long time to come. We're stuck with the Puerto Rico dump. But the need for central planning here is absolutely crucial. And it's not just Saipan. It's got to include Tinian and Rota and even the Northern Islands.
- Willens: There was an effort to try to address the planning needs of the Commonwealth government.
- McPhetres: Right. The OTSP. I've got a copy of that downstairs.
- Willens: It was my understanding that in fact those studies, some of which were well done, were on the whole discarded by the first Commonwealth Administration. Do you have any knowledge on that subject?
- McPhetres: Oh, yes. It's the same thing that's happened to all the plans. I've got a stack, in fact I've got some in my truck downstairs I took to the meeting I had at noon. Planning is like going to church. You feel the obligation to do it, so you go on Sundays, but when you walk out, you go right back to whatever you were doing. And the process of planning in the Trust Territory is probably one of the biggest criticisms one could make, although this is an excellent plan, 1946. It wasn't done. Nobody paid any attention to it. But you had the plan. You put it on the shelf. You said, yes, there's my plan. But the minute you try to implement it, and a plan is like a limitation on a person's freedom, because if you plan and say there can only be 5,000 hotel rooms, that means the guy who wants to build this 6,000th, can't do it, and so everybody is saying, it's the nimby (not in my back yard) syndrome. Zone him, but don't zone me. And that's where it all revolves.
- Willens: Did you follow the actions taken by the first Commonwealth government in terms of implementing these programs?
- McPhetres: Oh, they attempted to, yes, but they've never read it. I don't think they ever read it.
- Willens: You mentioned that your Chamber of Commerce group also did a study of land issues in the Commonwealth. What generally were the report's conclusions with respect to the significance of the Article 12 litigation on economic development?
- McPhetres: Well, keeping in mind two things. Nobody is against Article 12 in the way it is written in the Constitution. This is not an issue. Ownership of land is not an issue. The people in my committee and all the ones I've talked to have no problem with the 55-year leases. The problem comes about with the judicial interpretation in 1991 in which the so-called resulting trust was established. The point is that it's the judicial interpretation which has created a great many problems, since many investors use techniques for acquiring their land which were perfectly legal at the time but which by virtue of this court decision became illegal. And I point out as an example the Nikko Hotel acquired a leasehold and after the land owned by four siblings of one particular family was acquired by a corporation which was a 51% local by legal definition. It was registered corporation of 51%, which is what the Constitution of the Marinas defined as a corporation able to hold title to land. They then, that corporation bought the land. It then turned around and sold it to another corporation which leased it to the Nikko Hotel. Well, in 1986 the Constitution was amended to define a corporation for purposes of land holding as needing to be 100% local. So the court applied that definition to all prior land leases, which meant that nobody could have any faith in any deal that they had involving corporations prior

to 1986, which was when most of these things were done. The second decision that they made was, the color of the money determines the ownership. I use this rather loosely. But what it says is if the money to buy a piece of land comes from a person of non-Northern Marianas descent and goes to a person of Northern Marianas descent to do the actual purchasing, and even though title is in the person of Northern Marianas' descent, the fact that money came from a person of non-Northern Marianas descent makes this person in his control the legal, you're the lawyer, resulting trust. And therefore, the act never took place ab initio, which is where we find ourselves with so many of these land cases, the Article 12 cases. In which case, the three sisters of the Nikko now, if this case stopped today and if there were no appeals, which there are, they would inherit the Hotel Nikko as it stands with no obligations to the Nikko people, every improvement on the land belongs to them. And this has rippled through the international community. Nobody's coming in here to invest. We have Japanese newspaper articles, we've got trade magazine articles, saying don't put your money in the Northern Marianas because they change the rules in the middle of the game.

Willens: Do you think that the new legislation will be useful?

McPhetres: Oh, it's going to go a long ways. The problem is, of course, it is legislation, and legislation can be changed.

Willens: Well, it's going to be challenged.

McPhetres: It can be challenged, and Mr. Mitchell has already said that that's what he's going to do. And until that is laid to rest, there's probably going to be continued problems over attracting investors here. The Article 12 issue is not the only issue. Labor is another issue because people have come in. They've started businesses that are dependent on alien workers. And every once in a while, somebody from Commerce and Labor will pop up and say, you have too many, you can't have a carpenter, you have to have an electrician. Or you can't use your electrician as a carpenter, you have to hire one of each, even though you only need one man who can do both jobs. And so they get discouraged about doing business here. Then you have the whole attitude towards investors, which is we're going to give them the privilege of investing in our islands. But they're going to have to pay for it. And so we have what's called the 2% developers tax that's in place now. An investor has to pay up front 2% of the value of his investment to the government here, which is in theory to go to the government infrastructure that would eventually service that. But there's no requirement that that money be used to the benefit of that particular investment.

Willens: It goes into the general fund?

McPhetres: It can be used for other investment somewhere else, wherever they think it's most needed. But people are forgetting, that are making these decisions, is that the Marianas is in direct competition with Vietnam, with Australia, with any number of places around the world where they're saying to the investor, hey, I've got a great warehouse for you guys to do business in. I'll train your workers. We'll give you a ten-year moratorium on taxes. Just bring your money in, set up a company, and hire the people. Here we're saying, yes, you want to come in here? Here's what you got to pay. And it's turned off a lot of people. We've measured. Some months ago, one of the people involved in this committee figured close to a million dollars in investment flew over Saipan in the past year. They had planned to come here. They came and took a look and said, no way. And the same thing is true with the hotel construction. With the exception of the Hafa Adai addition, all the hotels that have already been permitted, have already been cleared to begin construction, have pulled out or shut down. Hotel projects.

- Willens: Either extensions or new hotels.
- McPhetres: Yes. Even Joeten's thing up in San Vicente. The financial backers are pulling out.
- Willens: In view of what you said earlier about wanting to have somewhat more control over where the island is going by way of planning rather than by . . .
- McPhetres: Exactly. See, one of the problems, a classic problem, is up at the college. It goes back to this business about hiring local. There is a term for it, shibboleth, which people say so often it becomes something they believe in, even though it has no foundation in truth. And that is, you've got to hire local. You've got to get more of our people into this. Well, there's nobody there. It's a question of sheer warm bodies. Bill Stewart calculated that if you hired every high school graduate from all the Marianas high schools, it would take 20 years to replace the number of alien workers that we have on island today. That would be saying, there's no more growth. It's just not realistic.
- Willens: Has he been active in the Chamber of Commerce studies?
- McPhetres: Not recently. He had been before. He's active in his own way. He does a lot of studies and his own publications. But the point here is that in this process of adopting this attitude, the college has set up a vocational education program, the main function of which is to train local people to take jobs in tourism and service and so forth. And it's based on the \$100 tax per alien worker brought into Saipan.
- Willens: What do you mean?
- McPhetres: Every alien worker who's brought in, the employer must pay \$100 into a voc ed fund.
- Willens: And that's what supporting the program?
- McPhetres: That's what supporting the program. Well, because of this economic downturn, construction has bottomed out. I mean, they're sending workers at home. At last count, somebody said they sent 3,000. The number of construction workers is down by 3,000 this year. Well, that means there's no more money coming in for that fund. That means you've got to scramble for money to continue the program, which doesn't train local people anyway. There's more Koreans and other students who are taking those programs.
- Willens: Where are the faculty coming from at the college?
- McPhetres: They're hired from the States, most of them. Some local people.
- Willens: Do you have any familiarity with the issues between the Commonwealth and the federal government?
- McPhetres: Oh, yes.
- Willens: Do you have any opinion as to the seriousness of those problems and the best way to address them?
- McPhetres: I don't think anything's going to be resolved until the people, the leadership of the Marianas can sit down in front of a mirror and say who am I? And then you turn around to the States and say, let's sit down and talk. Because you have so many disparate positions and points of view that Washington can have a very hard time taking this place seriously. Now you get classic examples. Our dearly departing Governor made a speech in Suva I think last summer.
- Willens: Where?
- McPhetres: Suva, Fiji. They were having a conference on tourism, and this Governor likes lots of conferences, he's always going to conferences. He made a speech which did not get the

coverage it deserved here. But basically he said we think the Northern Marianas should be taken as an example of how other island states and territories should develop. Get lots of alien workers, don't give them any rights, make them work and send them home. Sure, I thought we got rid of that in 1867, the War Between the States. But he said it, I mean it's on record.

Willens: In fact, are they actually being sent home?

McPhetres: Oh, some of them have been. But there are other ones. It's like this new law on prostitution. There's a problem here with forced prostitution. There's a real problem, where girls are hired in the Philippines, for example, on a waitress contract. And they come here, and they find they're in a nightclub that's expecting all kinds of extra services. The boss says, give me your passport, give me your documents, and do what I tell you to do. So they are forced into prostitution. Well, they passed an anti-prostitution law. They arrested all the girls. Well, the girls should be liberated. They should be taken into some other thing and say okay, here's your passport back and here's your job as a waitress, but don't lock them up; don't prosecute them. They're not there willingly. But the women here passed a law because all their husbands were getting involved.

Willens: That's the law currently on the books?

McPhetres: Yes. And it's a very thorough law. It's comprehensive to the point where it's almost unenforceable.

Willens: Your sense is that negotiating with the United States on some of these issues is going to be very difficult until the Marianas concludes whether it wants to live within the Covenant?

McPhetres: Yes. And does the Covenant say what it means and mean what it says? And it's very clear that there is a lot of reinterpreting, revisionist history going on here. And it is making Washington very upset. Plus the fact that the leadership doesn't agree either. You have John Babauta, who is our Washington Representative, saying yes, we have a labor problem. We have an abuse problem. The Governor stands up and says there's no problem. Everything's fine. And then you have this march by 200 construction workers saying they haven't been paid in six months and they're living on rats in the barracks. It's true.

Willens: What do you think is the real issue in this campaign?

McPhetres: The real issue in this campaign was to throw the bums out. It didn't matter who comes in. I personally feel that if they had run a boonie dog against Larry, it would have made a very good showing.

Willens: The winds have changed?

McPhetres: That's right.

Willens: Is there anything else that you can think of with respect to the federal government that you think is worth reminding me of?

McPhetres: Well, the federal government has to come to grips with the fact that the Commonwealth is not a territory like Guam. I mean there is a feeling in Washington I've had several officials express this: "I don't care what you call it, it's still a territory." And it affects how they approach the area. A lot of Washington people simply don't take this place seriously. And it's because of what's going on, among other things. But Washington needs to be educated on what the place is. But you can't do that until you've got everybody in agreement.

Willens: I understand that in the process of closing down the Trust Territory Administration here that you organized some of the archives and made certain judgments about what should

be allocated to what district and where it should be preserved. Could you tell me a little bit about what happened to the archives?

McPhetres: Oh, yes, sure. I was the TT archivist for ten years.

Willens: Which ten years?

McPhetres: 1981-91. In 1978 or 1979 we had a typhoon. And I was working at Public Affairs at the time. And I opened a bottom drawer after the typhoon passed in the Public Affairs office, it was the bottom drawer of a filing cabinet that had been damaged or water-soaked. I looked, original U.S. military records, the administration of the Northern Marianas. I mean, this stuff is gold. the original stuff that was issued in 1944-48, 1949, 1950. And I asked, I don't know if you remember Neiman Craley. Well, he was my nemesis. We were at loggerheads all over this whole thing. And I asked him what are we going to do with this? Well, we're going to take all the papers, put them in a dump truck, take them down to the dump and burn them.

Willens: That's what he said?

McPhetres: That's what he said. And so I started the campaign to preserve this stuff. I didn't know how or what we were going to do at the time. But I figured this would be a tremendous loss if we didn't do something. And by then, we had 1981 as our target date. So I figured two years to save the TT. So I was able to get an interim High Commissioner, Dan High, who was in between two guys, to agree to let me set up the archives program. And I got the University of Hawaii to send out some expert people to help us set up guidelines. And in 1981, on October 1, we launched the program to microfilm all the records of the Trust Territory. And never knowing when we were going to be cut off because of termination. We had to go as fast as possible. A lot of sloppy work was done, because we just couldn't go back and reshoot things where we knew we had another office to do in the next week.

Willens: What exactly did that entail, since I assume by your description that all the materials were not nicely collected in one warehouse?

McPhetres: Oh, no, we had to go from office to office as they closed down.

Willens: You were depending on each office's history and method of filings to determine what records were in fact available for you to copy?

McPhetres: Oh, we copied everything.

Willens: Had there been a document retention policy in effect in the Trust Territory?

McPhetres: There had been. Yes, there was.

Willens: So you did have agencies that had records going back to the 1940s?

McPhetres: Oh, yes. Lots of them.

Willens: So what happened then as you moved through the offices to copy documents?

McPhetres: We made decisions. If a document was published and it was actually a printed book or document, we didn't film it. If a document was in multiple copies, we took the best copy and filmed it. We made very few judgments about what the contents of the document were. For example, we'd get the Department Director's chron files; that's every copy of every letter he wrote. We didn't go through it to find out how many were invitations to his grandmother's wedding. It all went in the file. And then a lot of other stuff like Caterpillar repair manuals, we would send out to an area where we knew they were still using Caterpillar machines. And the net result of this was 2,200 rolls of microfilm, which

is 400,000 documents.

Willens: Wait a minute. Say that again.

McPhetres: 2,200 rolls of microfilm as an end product of this thing represents 400,000 pages of documents. Now, we had two things to decide—actually three things. Once we filmed it, the document was intrinsically valuable. Say, an original signed copy of a proclamation. The paper was valuable because it had the original signature. We would send that to the University of Hawaii Pacific Collection, because they would be in a position to preserve and maintain it. If it applied in some functional way to one of the four governments, we would send it to FSM or Palau or the Marianas. Otherwise, and this is about 75% of the documents, when we microfilmed it, we verified that the microfilm was at least readable, we burned it, because that was the whole purpose of this exercise, was to reduce the government file record. All of Capitol Hill was government files. There's no place to move it. At one point, there was a move to put it in U.S. National Archives in San Bruno, California. But then nobody would have access to it.

Willens: What happened to the 2,000 plus rolls of microfilm?

McPhetres: They're here. We had five sets made. There's a set up here at the college library.

Willens: That's in Mr. Del Rosario's area?

McPhetres: Yes. There's a set in Palau. There's a set in the FSM. And there's a set in the Marshalls.

Willens: And the original documents that were preserved because of some intrinsic historic interest that pertain to the Marianas are also in the Archives?

McPhetres: Well, in some cases those were given here because there is a library.

Willens: The Library at the college?

McPhetres: But I got into big trouble with the administration of the college because I would not turn over the audio visual collection.

Willens: What was that?

McPhetres: Oh, we had 20,000 or 30,000 photographs. We have audio tapes. We have movie films.

Willens: Generated by the TTPI?

McPhetres: Yes.

Willens: Where did that material go?

McPhetres: That all went to the University of Hawaii Pacific Collection, because my experience had been if you turn over—I mean, we found albums of photos—the Marianas negotiations. Oh, that's my uncle. Picture's gone. So I made that decision that all that stuff would go to the Pacific Collection. So it would be maintained. It was indexed along with everything else, so that if you're searching for all the materials on the Marianas negotiations and you'll get the listing of photographs that are there. They won't be available here, but you can write to Karen Peacock, and she'll make copies of them for you from the original materials.

Willens: Is the index located here?

McPhetres: Yes.

Willens: So there's a complete index of all the materials that are in Hawaii located in the Marianas?

- McPhetres: Yes. That's right.
- Willens: And then the archivist at the University of Hawaii would cooperate and can duplicate some of the materials that we might want?
- McPhetres: That's right.
- Willens: Speaking of indexes, do you have any suggestions as to how to find materials that might pertain specifically to the Marianas?
- McPhetres: PSD 7-5 Marianas, NMI.
- Willens: Say it again.
- McPhetres: We adopted a filing code that was specifically developed for the Trust Territory government in 1967. And the political development is one category, it's called PSD, political and social development, 7-5 is self-government, it's everything to do with political status, and it's organized first by geographical area, so you go to the NMI, and it's organized chronologically within that. So it will show you everything you wanted to know about whatever the TT had. Of course, it wouldn't include a lot of stuff that never came to the High Commissioner's office or to the AG's office, but there may be things in there that you are not aware of, because there were exchanges between, say the Attorney General of the TT and the High Commissioner about what effect such a decision would have if the Marianas went in a certain direction.
- Willens: And it might include some communications between OMSN and the TTPI.
- McPhetres: Oh, yes.
- Willens: And that would be up at the college?
- McPhetres: They've got two indexes up there. They contain the same material. One is a printout. The printout is what I prefer to use because you can browse much more easily. But they also have the same thing on the computer. So you can use a word search, and you can go through and find all that stuff, and then it will give you the roll number of the microfilm and the place on the microfilm where that batch of material begins.
- Willens: I assume that particular code then would pick up the Micronesian negotiations as well as the Marianas. It might be separately listed.
- McPhetres: It would be separately listed under TTPI. Any entries we made that affected two or more districts fell under the TTPI category. And the other stuff that was specifically for each of the six districts is listed there in alphabetical order.
- Willens: Under political and social development?
- McPhetres: No, first you go to PSD 7-5, then you go to the Marianas, then it goes from the earliest to the latest. Remember that the Marshalls, we sent 300 cases of documents to the Marshalls alone. When you get 300 cases of files, what do you do with them? As far as I know, that stuff is still sitting in the warehouse on the dock. I sent all the documents for the FSM to the College of Micronesia in Ponape.
- Willens: And the documents you sent here went to the [Northern Marianas] college.
- McPhetres: Went to the college. That's right.
- Willens: And have they organized them or found a place to store them?

- McPhetres: They've cleaned them up pretty much. They've thrown away what they don't want to keep, and they've filed what they want. But all this was done after it was microfilmed. So everybody has the same set of film. They're identical. As part of this project, we gave each of these four areas a complete set of microfilm equipment so they could take what we gave them and build the Commonwealth Archives, for example, on top of that. That's what Herbert Rosario and Tony Glubat, my ex-employee actually, are up there are doing. They're microfilming NMI documents and coding them in the same way. So they'll show up in the proper place in the index.
- Willens: They're basically applying the index that was generated at the TTPI to the Commonwealth documents that they are now in the process of microfilming and preserving.
- McPhetres: Yes.
- Willens: And the Commonwealth has some agency-wide preservation program?
- McPhetres: Well, in theory they are supposed to turn over all of the documents, but it's been a real tooth-pulling operation. What they have done, which is interesting, is that they've contracted with the Attorney General's office, with I think Immigration and a couple of other agencies, to go into their offices and film their records. They've done that for several NMI offices. See, one of the big tragedies here, or one of several, is that the NMI status files that were being stored in a locked cabinet in the Legislature when it was down at the beach. They were all destroyed when the Legislature building went up. We had offered to microfilm that stuff, and couldn't do it, couldn't touch it.
- Willens: We have put our materials into bound volumes, two separate bound volumes, and everything goes to the Commonwealth Archives.
- McPhetres: The Archives is perhaps, in the Marianas particularly, probably one of the single most useful tool that's ever happened here. You go back to one of the stories I didn't tell you about, on November 3, 1986, when people became U.S. citizens. The U.S. Passport Office applied federal law to the letter. Well, that was not good, because there were something like 200 Chamorros who were born in Palau. Another 150 or so, I forget, 200, were born and lived three or four generations in Yap. The U.S. brought them back up in 1947 and those people are living on Tinian now. They were not here, they could not prove that they were Chamorros because they were born in Yap and Palau. So they refused to issue passports. Well, fortunately in our Archives, we found just by accident, the Navy had issued I.D. cards to all these people. And on these I.D. cards, they listed ethnic group. So we were able to save, I don't know how many, 40, 50 people, because the Passport Office would accept that. And we scored a lot of points with those things. We have all the birth certificates that were issued from the beginning to 1987 or 1988. In fact I have to go up there tomorrow. One of my side jobs is doing research for lawyers on land cases, so I've got to go up there and research some German records to find out if a Carolinian family up in Tanapag actually has title to their property. And all the land records. I mean, a person could make a living, in fact I'm thinking about doing that, doing nothing but archival research into land records.
- Willens: Is Maynard Neese still alive?
- McPhetres: No. That's another great tragedy. He left here and promptly died. He was taking all his stuff back to live in a trailer alongside some lake somewhere.
- Willens: In the States?

McPhetres: In the States. He just died. He's the guy that made so much of our stuff so valuable because of his research and his writing on land records.

Willens: Sam, that concludes the questions I have with respect to this project. I may be back to you on other occasions. Thank you very much.

McPhetres: All right.