

INTERVIEW OF DANIEL T. MUNA

by **Howard P. Willens and Deanne C. Siemer**

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- Willens: Daniel T. Muna is a former member of the District Legislature in the Marianas and served as a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission. He has agreed to be interviewed in connection with our historical project. Dan, thank you very much for being available, which I really appreciate. As I mentioned off the record, we are doing a history of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, and one of the most valuable aspects of it is trying to learn from the people who were actively involved, how they got involved in politics, why they made the judgments they did back in the 1960s about an affiliation with the United States, and how they think it has worked out. So let me begin by asking you when you were born and who your parents were.
- Muna: I was born on January 8, 1937. My father is the late Sebastian Palacios Muna. My mother is the late Rosa Tudela Muna.
- Willens: How long had each of them lived on Saipan?
- Muna: Well, my father lived for 55 years, and my mother lived for 78 years.
- Willens: And were their parents also from the island?
- Muna: Yes, they were from the island.
- Willens: How many generations of Munas go back on Saipan?
- Muna: It's very difficult to say, really. Even the bishop's grandmother is a Muna. He's my second cousin.
- Willens: The bishop is a second cousin?
- Muna: That's right. Muna actually is one family. I know for a fact now that most of the Munas and I are second cousins. When you look at it, that's all second generation.
- Siemer: Are there also Munas on Guam?
- Muna: Yes, that's right. They are related to us, too. Like I have said, Muna is only one family. Like my son, for instance, I'm telling him who are the Munas since way back. And I told him that some of them are third and fourth generation from him.
- Willens: So do you think the original Munas came to Saipan from Guam?
- Muna: That's true.
- Willens: And that would have been sometime in the middle of the last century, in the middle 1800s?
- Muna: Middle 1800s or earlier than that.
- Willens: What did your father do?
- Muna: He was actually a farmer, and he worked as a gardener. He was a gardener for the Japanese Administration and then, right after the war, he also worked for the Agricultural Department during the Naval Administration here.
- Willens: How many brothers and sister do you have?
- Muna: I have four brothers and four sisters. I only have three sisters and myself living now.

- Willens: Did most of your brothers and sisters stay on the island and live here?
- Muna: Except one, my sister. She married into the Taitano family from Guam. She's still staying there.
- Siemer: What is her name?
- Muna: Ann Muna Taitano married to Peter Taitano of Guam.
- Siemer: What about your other brothers and sisters? What are their names?
- Muna: They are still here [in Saipan]. One is married into the Camacho family. The other one, my sister, is married to the Borja family.
- Willens: So there are connections with most of the other families on the island?
- Muna: That's right. That's very true.
- Willens: Where were you educated?
- Muna: Chalan Kanoa Elementary School. Then after that, intermediate school at Chalan Piao. Then after that, I went to Pacific Islands Central School. That's the equivalent of high school.
- Willens: Do you remember when you went there?
- Muna: In 1954.
- Willens: Do you remember any of your other classmates who were at PICS with you at that time?
- Muna: Yes. We had students from Saipan and from Rota at that time. Benjamin Manglona was one of my classmates at the Pacific Islands Central School.
- Willens: It's been suggested that the PICS School was a place where future leaders from all of Micronesia met for the first time and got to know each other.
- Muna: It looks that way, because I still remember those in the Congress of Micronesia and even now participating in the FSM leadership, as well as Palau and the Marshall Islands.
- Willens: Did you get to know some of the students from the other Districts at that time?
- Muna: Yes. We were very close.
- Willens: Who were some of the people from the other Districts that you got to know?
- Muna: The President of the Senate in the Congress of Micronesia, Tosiwo Nakayama. Bailey Olter. Those are people that I had met before. They were very prominent in their areas, even up to now.
- Willens: When you were younger, did you receive education under the Japanese system as it existed until 1944?
- Muna: I was supposed to go to first grade, but then the war came and I did not get to go to school. The war came in June of 1944, as I was preparing for my first grade.
- Willens: What is your recollection of the invasion and what happened at that time? Were you and your family given notice that there was going to be an invasion?
- Muna: Everybody knew that the war was coming; there was no need for you to get a notice. And there was a siren on the island which would give you a sign that enemy was coming, so you would be prepared like 15-20 minutes in advance.
- Willens: Was your family living in Garapan or one of the villages at the time?

- Muna: No. Garapan was completely—the people were told to leave. Nobody stayed in there.
- Willens: You had to move out for the Japanese?
- Muna: Yes, for the Japanese military. They evacuated the people there. Whether you liked it or not, you had to move.
- Willens: The Bishop told us that his family was just told to move from the family house in Garapan.
- Muna: Everybody moved from there, including Japanese citizens, private citizens, including Okinawan, Korean, everyone.
- Siemer: Did your family have a farm at that time?
- Muna: Yes, we did have a farm here, but we were closer to my brother-in-law in Gualo Rai, so that's where we stayed.
- Willens: So your family had property here in the San Vicente area?
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: But you went to stay with your brother-in-law over in Gualo Rai?
- Muna: Yes, because they were closer, you know, these people were very close. There was no distinction whether you are an outside family or not, you know, everybody was like brothers and sisters.
- Willens: What happened when the shelling started and the Americans landed?
- Muna: Well, the shelling didn't start immediately. The U.S. planes came in, and they were really high, not like in January of 1944 when they came in and dived down and took a picture of the island. But when they invaded Saipan, they were really up there. You could barely see them. Later on, all the island was in flames because all the Japanese fuel had been blown up, so you could see the entire island was in flames. Close to us there were Japanese fuel tanks.
- Willens: Were there some close to you where you were in Gualo Rai?
- Muna: No, not very close, about a mile away. There was one also in an area very close to us, but it was not hit during that night.
- Willens: What had you been told about the Americans before they landed? We've been told that some of the local people were told by the Japanese that the Americans were going to kill all the men and abuse the women and so forth.
- Muna: Yes, that's what the Japanese were telling all the people that the Americans were killers and rapists and whatever so that the people would be scared of the Americans, but somehow our people were not.
- Willens: Did they have any prior experience with Americans?
- Muna: No, I don't think so. Maybe from Guam, because some of them started coming in during the German Administration from Guam, and some of them knew the American people there since 1898.
- Willens: Did the local people dislike the Japanese?
- Muna: I don't think so, because the Japanese are not really that cruel, except when they were losing the war. That's the time that they didn't like the people from Saipan, the Carolinians,

Chamorros, even Koreans. They imposed, what do you call that, martial law? Something like that.

Willens: They imposed martial law on the civilian community?

Muna: That's right.

Willens: So your recollection is that the Japanese took a more hard-line position toward the local community as the war went on and they saw that they were likely to lose?

Muna: That's right. That is true.

Willens: Did you and your family go into caves during the bombardment?

Muna: That first night, yes. The following morning, we left Gualo Rai and then we started going up Tapotchau Mountain, but we just stopped by Chalan Galaide because my father's cousin had a farm there and they knew the surrounding area. So that's where we stayed. We didn't have our own cave, because of course the family that owns the property has the first priority to have the caves in the area. So what we did was we tried to dig as much as we could so we could have a place for our family.

Willens: How long did this go on?

Muna: For three weeks.

Willens: Then what happened?

Muna: Saipan at that time had a dense jungle, and when the Americans were very close, everything [in the jungle] just was going. Only the trees were standing, but no leaves.

Willens: Did the Americans come looking for you?

Muna: They had some scouts, the people that go ahead. So they were trying to find the civilians.

Willens: I see.

Muna: And once they found one of the civilians, they told him to go out and get all of the people to come out.

Willens: And then where did you go?

Muna: Well, when you came out, there was nothing you could bring with you. Whatever possessions you had, just got left there. You had only your clothing.

Willens: Then they took you to camp?

Muna: Yes. We marched for about a mile. Then we rode on a truck. We went down to San Jose—that was the internment camp—before they separated the Japanese, the Chamorro, the Carolinian.

Willens: San Jose first? That was before Susupe?

Muna: That's right. San Jose first.

Willens: And then they did the separation at San Jose?

Muna: Yes. And then they took you to Susupe. Susupe Camp was separate camp—Carolinian and Chamorro in one area; Japanese in one area; Okinawan in one area; Korean in one area. So that's how they divided up the camp.

Willens: What were the conditions like in the camp?

- Muna: It was really bad. People had dysentery because they didn't eat for a long time, then they had all of this food. They were really sick; I was sick myself also.
- Willens: Was there any medical treatment available?
- Muna: Yes. There was medical treatment available, but I don't know how an outbreak like that came out about. Maybe it's because the war was going on, and people didn't have food for several weeks. They didn't have enough water. In our case, we didn't have water, but we go out at night and tried to pick up sugarcane. That's for our water and food at the same time.
- Willens: Were you allowed to leave the camp during the day or in the evening?
- Muna: No, you were not allowed to leave the camp during the day or the evening, unless you got a special permission, or you had a special job like island constabulary and other menial jobs that the military wants you to do. People get paid like 15 cents to 25 cents a day.
- Willens: Did your father have some kind of a job at that time working for the military?
- Muna: No, not immediately, but then my father worked for the USCC.
- Willens: United States Commercial Company.
- Muna: Yes, that's where he worked.
- Willens: It was set up to farm, to produce food.
- Muna: Yes, make food for the interned people.
- Willens: For the soldiers too, I think.
- Muna: That's right. Not for the American soldiers; for the prisoners. For us and the Japanese and whatever.
- Willens: Was there any schooling provided for you in the camp?
- Muna: Yes, they did provide schooling on a limited basis. Because I still remember going to school there, and that's when I started learning about picnics, you know, go to the beach. But it was a guarded situation.
- Willens: The beach was guarded?
- Muna: Yes, for the Chamorros and the Carolinians. Especially the students to go to the beach and have fun. You could still see the amphibious craft were roaming around all over.
- Willens: At this time, was the military still seeking out some Japanese stragglers on the island?
- Muna: Yes. There were stragglers, of course. And that's when they asked for volunteers from our people, especially those young men, you know, 18, 19, 20 years old, if they can help out, because they knew the territory more than the American soldiers. They were trained for several days. This was volunteer only.
- Willens: It sounds pretty dangerous, though.
- Muna: That's right. And some of them are still alive today. Just recently they were given a chance to go to the PX here.
- Willens: I read about a ceremony honoring some of the volunteers during the reunions that took place a year or two ago.
- Muna: Yes. Some of them also went up to the Northern Islands.
- Willens: When were you and your family free to leave the camp and go back to your land?

- Muna: July 4, 1946.
- Willens: That's the Liberation Day that everyone celebrates.
- Muna: That's why the celebration here, but it was not really Liberation Day. That was when the camp was open, and everybody was free to move around. The reason we were at camp was really for our safety.
- Siemer: Because of the ordnance that was still around?
- Muna: Not only the ordnance but also to protect us against stray soldiers, like that.
- Willens: Were you and your family free to go back to your land after you were released from the internment camp? Did the U.S. government recognize that the Muna family owned land and was entitled to go back to it?
- Muna: At first, no. You have to prove that you owned that property. But proving that was very difficult because, like I said, when you got out from the cave and surrendered, you could not take anything with you except whatever you're wearing, and that was it.
- Willens: Did your family have difficulty in proving that it had owned land before the war?
- Muna: My family had a problem getting the property that we had in the Gualo Rai area, the site of the sugarcane [factory]. We still don't have it. Everything is settled now, but we haven't got the property back yet. They went through a lot of procedures trying to find out if that is really our property, but the Japanese record translated into English shows that that belongs to my father.
- Willens: After the internment camp then, you and your family were able to go back onto some property?
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: And begin to try to live a normal life.
- Muna: Yes. But most of the people really stayed in Chalan Kanoa. Several years later, then, they started moving out. But for several years they stayed there—from 1946 to 1949.
- Willens: Was that because of the security concern?
- Muna: That was the most secure area—Chalan Kanoa. Not only that, people had the day-to-day amenities that they were used to. If you went out and established yourself [on a farm], you didn't have water, you didn't have power. So that was a problem.
- Willens: Is that when some of the first local businesses got started?
- Muna: Yes. But before that, you see, some of our people went to their farms to raise chickens and pigs. Only during the day time; at night time they'd go down to Chalan Kanoa and stay there.
- Willens: It was during that period that the recently-deceased Herman Guerrero began his bakery? I guess he started his bakery in about 1946 or thereabouts?
- Muna: That's right. I think since Japanese time he had that small bakery that he was operating and then continued after the island was secure and people were free to move around.
- Willens: Did your family then stay in Chalan Kanoa?
- Muna: Yes. We stayed there until 1955.
- Willens: So that's where you lived when you began your education then. You mentioned the Saipan Intermediate School, and then you went away to PICS in 1954.

- Muna: And then I went to George Washington High School; that was where I graduated from high school.
- Siemer: Yes.
- Willens: What year was that?
- Muna: 1959.
- Willens: Did you go on to any further schooling at that point?
- Muna: Yes. I attended the Territorial College of Guam, and then they changed that to the College of Guam, for three years.
- Siemer: General academics.
- Siemer: When did you come back to Saipan?
- Muna: 1962.
- Siemer: When you came back to Saipan in 1962, were you employed?
- Muna: Yes. There was a vacancy in the Saipan Legislature, and I started working there in 1962.
- Willens: Had you been active politically before that point? Had you affiliated with either of the political parties that had come into being?
- Muna: Yes. It was not the Democrat or Republican parties then; and it was not yet the Popular and Territorial groups. Originally it was locally established parties. One was for the U.S., the other is not for the U.S. So in 1950, the Saipan Legislature got together with the Commissioners and came up with a resolution petitioning the United Nations that we wanted to be associated with the United States and with Guam, because Guam was much closer to us.
- Willens: That was the beginning.
- Muna: That was the beginning, yes.
- Willens: That was really the beginning of what became the Popular Party, wasn't it? In terms of the people who wanted to have a relationship with the United States but to achieve it through Guam?
- Muna: The Popular Party name and the Territorial Party name came from Guam. That's what the political parties of Guam were before. And when they tried to get affiliated with Guam, that's the name that we have [for the political parties in the Marianas]. But before, it was different.
- Willens: Yes. I've seen the name Progressive Party as the name that the Territorial Party had before.
- Muna: Yes, Progressive.
- Willens: Did you personally have strong views back in the 1950s as to what kind of a future status you thought was desirable?
- Muna: Yes, that's very true. At that time, you know, I was a little bit against the United States because of [their] not seeing what we really want. You know, they want to decide for the people here. I don't know, maybe you have heard that about me before the Marianas Political Status Commission. I know I have a record in the United States, because they were following me every time I went there.
- Willens: No, I didn't know that. They seemed to be following everybody at that time.

- Siemer: When you came back to work for the District Legislature, were you working on their staff?
- Muna: No. I worked for the Saipan Legislature. There were no District Legislatures at that time. And then we had the Charter Convention for the District Legislature.
- Willens: Did you play any role in that?
- Muna: I was the one who recorded everything, all that was taking place. I think there was a journal about that, but I don't know where.
- Willens: You don't know where it is now?
- Muna: Yes. Dr. Flick was the representative from the Trust Territory. I think he's a TT lawyer. He's the one who represented the Trust Territory, trying to create the Charter for the district governments.
- Willens: Did you have the sense in the 1950s that the people here were not being given the opportunities under the Naval Administration that you thought they ought to have?
- Muna: That's right, we were not really given the opportunity [to develop the economy]. It was a restricted place. No one would be able to come in without clearance from the Navy. That really was something that stopped the development here. There's no restriction on us going to Guam, but you have to go on certain days and you can stay for about 20 days and then you have to come back, except when you're a student. That's when they had different status for you to go to Guam.
- Willens: Do you think the people here in the late 1950s wanted more development and wanted to open Saipan up?
- Muna: That's right. The first development was the Royal Taga Hotel, and we welcomed that. The first free enterprise was also in the same year as the Royal Taga, when the Payless and the Townhouse established here.
- Willens: Who established the Townhouse?
- Muna: Joe San Guerrero. Joeten [Jose C. Tenorio] and [Manuel S.] Villagomez established [their stores] earlier than that. Then we decided that we needed open enterprise, so people have a choice where to go. Because two people controlling the island economically it's not right, especially Joeten and Villagomez.
- Willens: So your sense was that there should be more businesses in order to have more competition?
- Muna: That's right, because they were controlling the price of the commodities here. No choice.
- Willens: Did that become a political issue?
- Muna: That's when we started having political parties.
- Willens: You mean you think the economic conditions here were an important factor in forming a Territorial Party on the one hand and a Popular Party on the other?
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: So the issue of status was not necessarily the only issue on which they were divided?
- Muna: No. The issue of political affiliation was the most important one. You know when you have young political parties, people tend to use whatever means they have for you to follow them. That's only natural when they start having political development.

- Willens: Do you recall any significant changes that came about with the Kennedy Administration in 1961?
- Muna: Yes. I still remember that he was the one who came out with an Executive Order transferring the Northern Marianas administration to the Interior Department.
- Willens: Did you think that was a good idea?
- Muna: I think so, because if not for that, we would still be restricted under the military.
- Willens: Do you think the security concerns here related to the fact that there was the NTTU facility on the island?
- Muna: Yes. That's operated by the CIA.
- Willens: Did you know what that NTTU facility was actually doing?
- Muna: We knew that was a Navy Technical Training Unit of the United States.
- Willens: Did you know what kind of training they were doing?
- Muna: Yes. We understood that the Flying Tigers planes were coming in; one would only land at midnight. Then they have drops and everything, people coming out, and they just run around the island to confuse whoever's there thinking that this is a big place. They go around for several hours, and then they put them at Marpi.
- Willens: Getting people here?
- Muna: To be trained. So they just go around for several hours, making them believe that this is a big place and secret so they won't know where they are.
- Willens: But you and your friends knew this was going on?
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: So the CIA thought they had a very highly-protected secret, but in fact the local people knew what was going on?
- Muna: Yes, because you see they restricted the Kagman area. They closed the Kagman Peninsula, and then from San Roque all the way to Marpi they closed the roads; there was only a gate for you to go in and go out.
- Siemer: So they had a huge piece of the island then closed off?
- Muna: That's right.
- Siemer: How was it closed off at Kagman?
- Muna: At the entrance way, and they had a fence all around just to make sure that you knew the boundary.
- Willens: Do you remember any discussion then about whether the Kennedy Administration was going to have some kind of a new attitude toward Micronesia?
- Muna: Well, they had the Solomon Commission.
- Willens: What did you hear about the Solomon Commission and its Report?
- Muna: They came here.
- Willens: Did you meet them?
- Muna: I was at school in Guam at that time. I didn't meet them, but I had heard that they were here to come up with a feasibility study of making Micronesia become self-sufficient.

- Willens: One of their principal goals was to look at the economic side of Micronesia.
- Muna: True.
- Willens: Did you know that in the early 1960s President Kennedy and the United States wanted to adopt programs that would bring all of Micronesia under the United States and make it part of the United States?
- Muna: That's a rumor, but I'm not too sure about that.
- Willens: The District Legislature was created in 1963, and I've noticed from the records that you became a member, an elected member in 1964. Is that right?
- Muna: Not an elected member, because I was appointed by the Mayor of Saipan in 1964 to replace Frank Ada. Frank Ada was an elected member. There were two administrative personnel who were elected to the Legislature. They resigned because of their position in the district government.
- Willens: So you were appointed to fill his vacancy until the conclusion of his term?
- Muna: Right.
- Willens: And then you ran in your own right in 1965, I guess?
- Muna: 1965.
- Willens: What prompted you to do that? Did you want to have a career in politics?
- Muna: I was interested in that since initially I had the opportunity when I talked to the Mayor, Mayor Vicente Sablan. And he said [it was] okay for me to fill that position. So I appreciated that. That's when I went into politics.
- Willens: It was not a full-time job at the time, was it?
- Muna: It was not a full-time job. I was a member of the Legislature; at the same time I still worked for the Saipan Legislature. So I knew what was going on.
- Willens: Did the Saipan Legislature subsequently become the Saipan Municipal Council?
- Muna: That's when we had a problem with the Congress of Micronesia, because they came out with legislation restricting the municipality from naming their council as a legislature. So we continued using the [name] Legislature in defiance of their law, but later on we accepted the Municipal Council. It was several years later down the road when we accepted that.
- Willens: Were you active at all in what was called the Council of Micronesia that existed before there was a Congress of Micronesia?
- Muna: I was not active really with that, but I knew that Ben Santos and the one from Rota, Mendiola, were the ones who represented the Northern Marianas in the Council of Micronesia.
- Willens: Did you and other members of the District Legislature here want to have a Congress of Micronesia?
- Muna: I was one of those who really opposed the establishment of the Congress of Micronesia.
- Willens: What was your thinking at the time?
- Muna: At the time I was thinking that by having the Congress of Micronesia, the purpose of that was to unify all of Micronesia as one entity. And I believed that it could not happen. We

- were separated by a thousand miles of water with different languages, different cultures. It's not possible.
- Willens: Was that always your view?
- Muna: That was my view. I studied world history and what happened in other areas. When you look at other areas in which they were separated, eventually they were really separated, and they have a different nation.
- Willens: Were there people here who thought that you could overcome those obstacles and have a single unified Micronesia?
- Muna: No, nobody could convince me of that.
- Willens: But some people believed that, didn't they?
- Muna: Some people believed that, yes.
- Willens: Who do you remember being the most outspoken advocates of that?
- Muna: Dr. Kaipat.
- Willens: How about Dr. Palacios. He seemed at some point to want to keep all of Micronesia together.
- Muna: Yes, at some point yes, I knew that, but somehow you know, but he changed his mind, because he knew in reality it wasn't going to work.
- Siemer: Are you related to Dr. Palacios?
- Muna: Yes; he's my second cousin.
- Willens: Did you or Ben Santos or others have any input to the creation of the Congress of Micronesia? Did anyone ask your views as to whether it ought to be created and what its powers ought to be?
- Muna: They had this representative from the Sixth District and a meeting, just like a convention, in which they talked about that. Because whether you like it or not, that's the established policy of the High Commissioner and the Interior Department that they should have this Congress of Micronesia. And of course our delegate participated there knowing that it was going to happen. We tried to say no. There was a resolution in the Legislature that we did not want to be part of that Congress of Micronesia and that we were not going to abide by that, even if it was established.
- Willens: That was the beginning of a long history of differences between the Marianas and the Congress of Micronesia.
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: The United Nations would send a visiting mission here every three years, and they had a visiting mission in 1961 and a visiting mission in 1964, and another one in 1967. Do you recall any meetings that you personally had with these visiting missions where you explained why you thought the Marianas should be separate from the rest of Micronesia?
- Muna: Yes. I still remember two of them when they came over.
- Willens: Which ones do you remember?
- Muna: 1964 and 1967. I am not too sure whether Angie Brooks . . .
- Willens: From Liberia was the Chairwoman of one of them?

Muna: That's right. That's when I spoke for being a part of the United States, and I openly told the U.N. Council members that this is what we want, this is what the people decided, so why not go back and tell the United Nations that this is what the people want.

Willens: What did they say?

Muna: They just listened. I stood there, and I talked for about 20 minutes. I didn't have a prepared statement, but I just put down some notes, and I just continued pursuing the interests of the people.

Willens: Did you have the occasion, in those early years in the 1960s, to go to Washington and explain your views to any representatives of the State Department or the Interior Department?

Muna: No. The only time that we have sent a representative to the United States was in 1966.

Willens: Who went?

Muna: I didn't go with the group. It was Mayor Sablan, and, I think Dr. Palacios. I know Dr. Palacios was there.

Willens: Did they have a specific mission?

Muna: Yes. To go to Washington, D.C. and to present our case on war claims at that time and also go to the United Nations and petition. I don't know if they did that. I don't remember. But there was that mission that they went to Washington, D.C. I still remember Ruth Van Cleve, the Interior Department Under Secretary. She's the one that was there, and she was not very receptive really.

Willens: She was there in 1966 as head of the Office of Territorial Affairs. As you began to work in the District Legislature, what subjects of legislation were of importance to you at that time, in the 1960s?

Muna: Of course, the political status of our people. That was the most important one.

Willens: Was there any reduction in the ability of the District Legislature to raise revenues as a result of the creation of the Congress of Micronesia?

Muna: At the start of the creation of the Congress of Micronesia, we lost some of the revenue that had been generated here. This is like Territorial concerned areas in which they took away the revenues that we had. But whatever revenue that we had here in the Northern Marianas, we gave back to the municipality, like municipality of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. We gave them some money so that they could continue to operate. Although we had a very minimal amount of money, we tried to do whatever was necessary to continue the function of the Legislature. By doing that, we established a good relationship between Tinian, Rota and Saipan.

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

Muna: I did. In the first election in 1964, I ran for the Precinct 1—that is part of Chalan Kanoa, San Antonio, Tinian and Rota. But Benjamin Manglona was running for the Territorial Party, and I was running for the Popular Party here. They don't know me in Rota. Of course they knew me in Tinian and Saipan. Although I had advantage in Saipan and Tinian against Manglona, he had a huge advantage over me there on Rota. He had a landslide vote against me.

Willens: So you were defeated.

Muna: That's right.

- Willens: Did you ever run again?
- Muna: No.
- Willens: I recall that Manny Muna was elected to the Congress of Micronesia.
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: What is his relationship with you?
- Muna: He's my first cousin. He ran for the Popular Party at that time. I think he was the only one that won the election, the first election for the Congress of Micronesia.
- Willens: Did the representative from the Marianas who went to the Congress of Micronesia stay in close contact with those of you in the District Legislature?
- Muna: Yes. In the political system here, it's not something that you just get mad at everybody, you know. We coexist.
- Willens: What happened in the 1969 plebiscites here in Saipan and on Guam when the issue of reunification with Guam was put before the voters here and also put before the voters on Guam? Why do you think that failed in Guam?
- Muna: The people of Guam rejected that, and I think I know the reason why. Guam's more advanced than us, and they have their own problems also. The people just decided that they didn't want to bring in the poor cousin, the Northern Marianas, and then to have more problems when they have their own problems in existence there. Not only that, the leadership of Guam really didn't educate the people of Guam to the advantages and disadvantages that they're going to have if they unified with the Northern Marianas. That's the failure of the leadership of Guam.
- Willens: Did you personally go over to Guam to try to campaign on this issue?
- Muna: No, we didn't really go there, because we wanted them to do it for themselves, because we were promised that they're going to do whatever was necessary, you know, so we could complete this plebiscite for Guam to accept and for us to accept the unification.
- Willens: Were you led to believe that the Guamanians would support the reunification?
- Muna: That's right, because they were the ones who proposed having a plebiscite at the same time—Guam and the Northern Marianas.
- Willens: That idea came from the Guamanians?
- Muna: From us and from them, all together.
- Willens: After that rejection, so to speak, in Guam, did you personally change your view then about negotiating directly with the United States rather than seeking reunification with Guam?
- Muna: It does not really change when Guam rejected us, because I worked hard to make sure that our people voted, even though Guam voted first. They had the election and the plebiscite on Tuesday, November 2. And then we had ours the following Saturday. And it was really difficult to defend our deciding to be part of Guam. It was very difficult, because I still can hear the late Jess Mafnas telling the people that Guam doesn't want us any more, so why vote for it? Then we decided that if we don't go out and support the unification, then it means that we surrender, and not only that, if we reject that too, then the United States Government would look at it as if we were not too sure about where we were going. That's the reason why we worked for it.

- Willens: It was about this time in 1969 that the Congress of Micronesia Future Political Status Commission issued a report. In this report, the Commission recommended something called free association or independence. Dr. Palacios was a member of that Commission. So it looked as though the Congress of Micronesia had decided on a future political status relationship with the United States that was very different from what you wanted.
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: Did you have any opportunity to talk to Dr. Palacios or other members of the Commission about why they had come out with that kind of recommendation?
- Muna: Yes. I talked to Dr. Palacios about that, and he was trying to convince me that the other areas under the Trusteeship arrangement decided to be a freely associated state with a status like New Zealand had for some other parts of the Pacific, and that it was good for the people.
- Willens: That's what he said?
- Muna: Yes. And we were usually arguing. We were very close, and we usually argued. We argued on the merits, and somehow, during that long stretch he decided later on that it was not so good. He supported that [free association] initially in the beginning. Later on, he tried to get away from that. A blessing came to us because the United States government gave the Congress of Micronesia a proposal for a Commonwealth of Micronesia, which they [the Congress of Micronesia] already rejected there. But we endorsed that commonwealth idea for the Northern Marianas. That's when we started moving forward for commonwealth.
- Siemer: Were you still working for the Saipan Legislature at that time?
- Muna: Yes.
- Siemer: That's right.
- Siemer: What was the feeling in the Saipan Legislature itself with respect to this commonwealth proposal back at that time?
- Muna: Everybody seemed to be quite happy about that, and there was also support from them in regards to the commonwealth proposal. Everybody seemed to go for it, even Tinian and I think the Tinian Municipal Council.
- Willens: At some point, Dr. Palacios seemed to have the view that it would be desirable to keep all of Micronesia together, and he seemed to have some status in the Carolinian community that influenced him on that point. Do you remember hearing from him along those lines?
- Muna: Yes. I understand that, and you are right.
- Willens: Do you recall his thinking that you could bring the Marshalls and Yap and Palau and Ponape all together with the Marianas into a cohesive political entity?
- Muna: Dr. Palacios had this tendency to think more for the benefit of the people, not taking into consideration the problems that would be confronted later on. This was really what he was for. He was telling everybody that a leader should lead, not just listen, but should lead. That was his philosophy. But somehow, somewhere along the line he started to change. But he was a very difficult man to change.
- Willens: He did change his views over time, but he was a very unique individual; that certainly is true. Were you on Saipan when Secretary of the Interior Hickel came here in May 1969 and made a high-publicized speech?

- Muna: Yes, equal pay for equal work and equal qualification.
- Willens: That's right. That was one of his major points.
- Muna: He didn't say equal work, you know. We just used that equal. Equal work for equal pay for equal qualification. That was his promise, but nothing came of it.
- Siemer: Did he also talk about the land situation at that time?
- Muna: Yes. He did talk about the land situation, that situation where we have established the Land Commission for each district.
- Willens: That was a result of his speech on the subject?
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: We had the occasion to talk to him recently. He's been the Governor of Alaska on and off for many years. He came out here because he thought he understood what it was like to be a territory, because Alaska had been a territory, and he didn't like being run by the Department of the Interior any more than he thought you people liked being ordered around by the Interior Department. He announced for the first time that the United States wanted to sit down with a group of Micronesians and try to work out some future political relationship with the United States. Did that come as a surprise to anyone here?
- Muna: No, not really. I don't know about the other districts, but for us, we were expecting that to happen, because we were waiting for some answers.
- Willens: Had you ever gotten any kind of response from the United States to these various resolutions and petitions?
- Muna: No. All the advice we received was that if we really wanted to be a part of the United States, we should continue pursuing that.
- Willens: But no one gave you any reason to hope that you might be successful?
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: The United States position for many years, as you know, better than I, was to say no, there will be no separate negotiations.
- Muna: No fragmentation.
- Willens: What do you think brought about a change in the U.S. position?
- Muna: I don't know. Maybe concerns about Russia.
- Willens: You think defense concerns?
- Muna: Defense concerns, yes, that's true.
- Willens: When did you first learn that the Defense Department had an interest in acquiring most if not all of Tinian?
- Muna: I forget exactly when. In Washington they were thinking about not putting all their eggs in one basket, so they were thinking about going north to the Marianas. I have heard about that, and maybe that's the reason why.
- Willens: In other words, before the negotiations ever began with the Marianas, you had some idea that they were interested in Tinian?
- Muna: That's right, because the Vietnam war was still going on at that time. Maybe military strategists were looking at Tinian, maybe pull back from the Philippines or wherever.

- Willens: A group of Micronesians did go to Washington to sit down with Secretary Hickel and representatives from other departments. The delegation from here included Dr. Palacios and Benjamin Manglona. Not much came of the first session of negotiations. Do you remember hearing anything about it from either Benjamin or Dr. Palacios?
- Muna: 1969, that's the time I went to Washington also.
- Willens: What took you to Washington then?
- Muna: Political issues, first.
- Willens: Were you part of a delegation?
- Muna: That's right. And then we also went to the United Nations. Herman was with me. Ben Santos, Herman Guerrero. But we were in New York, and then he decided to go home.
- Willens: 1969?
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: Do you remember participating in any discussions at the Interior Department with somebody called Harrison Loesch?
- Muna: Yes. That's right.
- Siemer: Which Herman Guerrero was it?
- Muna: Herman Q.
- Siemer: So Herman Q. was with you and then he decided to go home?
- Muna: Yes, in New York. He just suddenly said I'm going to go back home.
- Willens: What is your recollection of Mr. Loesch?
- Muna: He's very shrewd, and he just didn't believe that it was going to happen, what we wanted.
- Willens: The land seemed to be a major issue in those first negotiations.
- Muna: Maybe I'm talking about the Congress of Micronesia delegation that went there. I'm not aware of that.
- Willens: If you went to the U.N., you probably went earlier in the year. You probably went in June.
- Muna: Yes. But they came later on in October.
- Willens: Yes. So do you remember hearing anything about that first session of negotiations, either from Dr. Palacios or from Benjamin Manglona?
- Muna: No.
- Siemer: When you were in Washington, did your delegation go and visit the Congress?
- Muna: Yes, we did, but on an individual basis.
- Siemer: Do you remember which Congressman you visited?
- Muna: We visited especially the Chairman of the Interior and Insular Affairs.
- Siemer: Was it Aspinall?
- Muna: Aspinall, yes. And Udall.
- Willens: Udall was the chairman of the full Committee, I think.

- Siemer: What was Aspinall's reaction to what the Marianas wanted?
- Muna: Oh, he was very receptive, but he was noncommittal really. He appreciated what we were doing.
- Willens: In 1970, as you remember, the so-called commonwealth proposal was offered by the United States and turned down by the Congress of Micronesia. After the commonwealth proposal was rejected by the Congress of Micronesia, Senator Borja made a speech in the Congress saying that although it wasn't perfect, it still was something that the people of the Marianas might want to use as a starting point for their own negotiation. There was an election in the fall of 1970 when every member of the Territorial Party got defeated, and all the Popular candidates got elected.
- Muna: That's right. That's when Eddie was elected.
- Willens: I think Eddie was elected for the first time. Was status one of the principal issues?
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: Was it THE issue?
- Muna: It was THE issue, right.
- Willens: And Senator Borja then became concerned because he was in the Territorial Party at the time, but he wanted to consider changing parties. What was your assessment of Senator Borja as a politician and a leader?
- Muna: Really I cannot assess him, because I don't want to talk about him. This is my first cousin.
- Willens: He did subsequently change parties, did he not?
- Muna: That's right.
- Siemer: Was he always a strong supporter of close relations with the United States?
- Muna: Yes, he was a strong supporter. He's the one that really stood up for direct annexation with the United States rather than Guam.
- Willens: So after that 1970 election, the Marianas continued to press for separate negotiations. Ed Pangelinan and Herman Q. Guerrero were members of what was called the Joint Committee on Future Status that was created by the Congress of Micronesia. Did Ed Pangelinan and Herman Q. Guerrero keep you and other members of the Legislature informed as to what was going on within those negotiations?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: Did they consult with you about when they should approach Ambassador Williams and his people and try to get some agreement to separate negotiations?
- Muna: Yes, right.
- Willens: What was the overall strategy for accomplishing the goal of separate negotiations?
- Muna: Oh, they had this special meeting in Palau. Ambassador Williams was there. They presented our case to him. I assume Ambassador Williams conveyed that message to Washington. Henry Kissinger was the Secretary of State at that time, so I don't know whether it was him, or Nixon, who made it possible to set the stage for separate negotiations. But they accepted us.

- Willens: You remember it all happening in Palau? That's when the formal paper was presented, and there was an immediate answer; it was immediate acceptance of that. Do you remember a visit out here in the prior year, December of 1971, by an Ambassador Hummel who worked with Ambassador Williams? Do you ever remember meeting an Ambassador Hummel?
- Muna: That's right. I remember him; I remember his name.
- Willens: He was one of the people who was supposed to discourage you from seeking separate negotiations. I gather he was not successful in discouraging you?
- Muna: I guess that we had made up our mind.
- Willens: How did it happen that you became a member of the Political Status Commission? Did you want to be a member?
- Muna: Well, I wanted to be a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission. I was trying to get in from the District Legislature, but I know so many of us wanted to be a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission. Somehow I was lucky enough that the Municipal Council appointed me as their delegate to the Marianas Political Status Commission. I guess they had that confidence in me.
- Willens: Was there a lot of competition to get on the Commission?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: Was there very much debate that went on before that Commission was created as to how large it ought to be and where its members ought to come from?
- Muna: We came up with a proposal in the Legislature on who should be represented in the Marianas Political Status Commission. That's the reason why we have the Northern Islands included. For the Northern Islands we have one, because there's not too many people there. And we have two from Tinian to be selected by the Municipal Council. Two from Rota and two from Saipan. One to be selected representing the business community. Two from the Congress of Micronesia. One from the Carolinian community.
- Willens: Was it also from the parties? One from the Popular Party and one from the Territorial Party?
- Muna: Yes, that's right.
- Willens: But as you recall, there was general agreement that it ought to be representative in that way?
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: There was a hearing on the proposed legislation, and one of the issues raised was about the amount of funding. There was some question about whether \$25,000 or whatever it was was going to be sufficient. Did you personally think that this was going to be a process that would go on for two and a half years, or did you think it was going to be a much shorter assignment?
- Muna: I envisioned that it would be more than two years.
- Willens: Why?
- Muna: Because there were certain things that needed to be discussed by both sides, and we didn't know for sure where we were going.
- Willens: Actually, right after that Palau meeting that you referred to, Ambassador Williams came

to Saipan. He wanted to meet with the leadership in Saipan to see if they all supported the separate negotiations. Do you remember meeting with Ambassador Williams on that occasion?

Muna: Yes.

Willens: What was your initial impression of him?

Muna: Well, I think he was representing the United States as Ambassador, although I knew that he had to consult with Washington on any important issue that we discussed or any commitment that he was going to make. But he was sincere.

Willens: Did he give you any reason to believe how long he thought it was going to take or what he thought the negotiating process would be?

Muna: No. I don't think so. Because every time we had an unofficial meeting, it wasn't something that we discussed in detail—what are we going to do or what are we going to go on from there. That's the reason why when we had that first negotiation when we sat down at Royal Taga, that's when the groundwork was started. That's when we started to know where we were going and what we wanted to try to get from the Ambassador.

Willens: The Commission wasn't appointed until August 1972, and then you began having meetings to organize yourself and create committees. Then do you remember sending Ed Pangelinan to Washington to look for a consultant?

Muna: That's right.

Willens: What direction did Ed have from you as Chairman?

Muna: We gave him the authority to get us an attorney that really could help.

Willens: Had you worked with Ed Pangelinan before? He was relatively young.

Muna: Not really, except when he came back to the island as an attorney, then when he was a member of the Congress of Micronesia. But aside from that, he was staying in the States. Of course, he was like a classmate to me, because we went to school together on Guam, at the Territorial College of Guam.

Willens: Did you think that having an attorney as Chairman of the Commission was a good idea?

Muna: Yes, I think so. It was an advantage to us also.

Willens: Do you have a recollection of the first round of negotiations at the Royal Taga? What is your memory today?

Muna: Only paperwork.

Willens: It was supposed to be ceremonial.

Muna: Yes, ceremonial paperwork, that was it.

Willens: Before the first session took place, I've learned that there was a meeting that you and other members of the Commission had with Jim White with some Guamanians on the subject of U.S. military land needs.

Muna: Yes.

Willens: Do you recall anything about why you went to Guam on that subject and what you learned?

Muna: Not all of us went to Guam.

- Willens: Did you?
- Muna: No, I didn't.
- Willens: Did you participate in any of the discussions about U.S. military requirements?
- Muna: They came with a reporter, and that's how we learned about whatever they had discussed on Guam.
- Willens: Was it your general view that you and other members of the Commission could learn a good deal from Guam in how to deal with the United States?
- Muna: Yes, we could learn from Guam, because we knew that Guam was a military area. Almost half of the island was U.S. military, so we could find out the mistakes that they have made, and that's the reason why they went to Guam.
- Willens: Were there certain aspects of Guam's relationship with the United States that you wanted to avoid?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: What comes to mind?
- Muna: Well, what comes to mind is not for the United States to get whatever they want here without us sitting down and discussing the need for the military. That's the primary thing that we wanted to do.
- Siemer: The people in Guam had never had a chance to negotiate about the military.
- Muna: That's right.
- Siemer: So you were basically looking for what problems they had encountered so you could negotiate and make sure that didn't happen here?
- Muna: Yes.
- Siemer: Were there particular people in Guam who were thought to be knowledgeable about that subject?
- Muna: Initially we were not too sure, but then Jim White came into the picture, and that's how he gave us some of the problems that Guam was having with the military and gave us advice as to what we should do about the military needs here, just to find out first from the United States their requirement for the military.
- Willens: You probably knew that Guam was governed by an Organic Act that was passed by the U.S. Congress and could be changed at any time by the U.S. Congress.
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: Did you have friends in Guam with whom you could discuss questions of political status?
- Muna: Yes, I did have friends on Guam. We worked closely with the Guam Senators. We went to Guam often and talked to them, and they would come over here and talk to us.
- Willens: As you know, the Guamanians are still unhappy with their political status and are seeking something called a Commonwealth Act now. But they were not happy with their status back then, were they?
- Muna: I think they were happy, but soon as we had this commonwealth status agreement with the United States, they looked at it and said, "Hey, wait a minute. Why? What's going on?"

- We have been U.S. citizens for many years, and we sacrificed for our country, and we still have this [territorial] status. Why this [better status] for the Northern Marianas?"
- Willens: At the first formal session, Ed Pangelinan made a statement on behalf of the Commission that addressed political status and economics and land. One of the issues raised was land alienation. In the very opening statement, the Commission stated that it wanted to achieve some protection for its people with respect to transfer of land. Was that something that was of importance to you?
- Muna: To be frank with you, in the beginning I was not convinced that that was important. But after arguing with Dr. Palacios (and him giving me the reason why we should have that protection, because that's the only thing we have on the island), I changed my mind and I went for that. And then I was convinced that that was one of the most important things for our people, because that's the only resource that we have.
- Willens: And the idea for that protection came from the Commission rather than from the U.S. delegation. Is that correct?
- Muna: That's correct. To be honest, I think it was Dr. Palacios who argued for that. Dr. Palacios told me at the same time that if that was not included, then he was not going to support the Covenant.
- Willens: It was that important to him?
- Muna: That's right. I'm glad we have that, because that's the only protection we have now.
- Siemer: Was there a similar reaction by other members of the Commission that it wasn't as centrally important to them when they started, but Dr. Palacios kept bringing it up and kept insisting that it was a key provision that he had to have?
- Muna: Yes. He was very persistent on that.
- Siemer: He was always focused on land and how to deal with land, wasn't he?
- Muna: That's right.
- Siemer: Was that because of his family's particular situation?
- Muna: No. I think he envisioned something like what do we have, and what protection our people will have in the future. I think he made a decision that this was the only protection we have, the land alienation issue. So that the land can still belong to the people rather than our right to sell title to your property. And that's Dr. Palacios' area.
- Siemer: Do you know if he was influenced by what he saw in Hawaii?
- Muna: I don't know, but he didn't tell me about Hawaii.
- Siemer: Was he concerned about the Japanese in particular?
- Muna: Was he concerned about the Japanese in what?
- Siemer: Was he worried that the Japanese would come here and buy land and that the local people wouldn't be able to resist the prices that the Japanese would pay?
- Muna: Yes. He said that to me personally. That's what he was very concerned about, because once you give away your land, it's never returned.
- Willens: Let me just go back one minute to an inflammatory period in Marianas history, back in early 1971 when the Congress of Micronesia buildings were burned down. What do you remember about that dispute? What prompted that strong expression of disagreement in the Marianas?

- Muna: The Congress of Micronesia would insist that there's no separation. That's what really prompted some of our people to take action.
- Willens: Because the Congress of Micronesia had said there will be no separation out of the Marianas, that everyone has to stay together?
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: There also were disputes about revenue sharing and things of that sort, were there not?
- Muna: Not much really, because since they were established, you know, they have their own share of the revenue. We have ours on a district basis. If that is the reason, then the creation of the Compact of Micronesia would be the first step in which our people would go against the Congress of Micronesia.
- Willens: One of the law enforcement people we talked to recently said that they investigated the arson and they think they have an idea who did it but that they never prosecuted the person because he died shortly thereafter.
- Muna: I was also a suspect, to tell you the truth.
- Siemer: Why?
- Muna: Well, I don't know.
- Willens: There was something in the materials suggesting that at some meeting of the Legislature somebody (unnamed) said we ought to burn their buildings down. But I've been told that after it happened, the leadership of the Legislature went to the person or persons who said this and they denied having anything to do with it.
- Muna: Yes, we denied that, that's for sure. Somebody somehow made this decision to do that. I understand also that at one time somebody was shooting down from the mountain to the building.
- Willens: Into the Congress' building?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: I hadn't heard about that. I'd heard about the march up the Hill with burning a copy of the TT Code. I forget who did that. Was that Herman?
- Muna: Yes, Herman Q. Guerrero and Herman T. Palacios.
- Willens: As a result, the High Commissioner I understand was afraid. What was your impression of the High Commissioner in those days, Mr. Johnston?
- Muna: Ed Johnston, right?
- Willens: Right.
- Muna: That guy really hated my guts. He thought that I was trying to get him fired as a High Commissioner. There was this Jack Anderson . . .
- Willens: Yes, Jack Anderson, the columnist?
- Muna: Right. He said something about corruption in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and he was very furious.
- Willens: The High Commissioner was furious?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: Because he thought you had planted the information?

- Muna: That's right. I didn't see him for several months, and I met him and he said, "Hey, Danny, I'm still here."
- Willens: Well maybe he had a sense of humor about it. Did he have any kind of a personal relationship with the local people?
- Muna: No, not like Norwood. Norwood was the only High Commissioner that went down to the grassroots.
- Willens: How about the former Deputy High Commissioner Jose Benitez of Puerto Rico? He was reported as someone who went out into the villages.
- Muna: Oh, yes, I forgot about him. But I'm talking about the High Commissioner. Even Taitano is okay, Richard?
- Willens: Richard, yes.
- Muna: Benitez, Richard [Taitano]. But I'm talking about the High Commissioner. Only Norwood was the one who really visited the villages and talked to the people. Other than that, no.
- Willens: There were very few Micronesians in the TTPI government at that time, in the 1960s. Isn't that right?
- Muna: That's right, because the budget also is limited. I can understand that.
- Willens: Near the end of the first ceremonial session, the United States delegation asked the Marianas Political Status Commission whether it would commit to stand behind any agreement that was entered into with the United States delegation. Do you have any recollection of the U.S. request that the Commission state whether it would stand behind an agreement?
- Muna: I do remember that there were discussions among us about that, and there was disagreement of course. That's the reason why, maybe, Joe Tenorio after that decided to quit. Anyhow, we just continued going on. Then we decided that we would just look at their proposal first to find out if we agreed to it or not.
- Willens: Did you feel that there was a possibility of being able to keep the 15 members of the Commission behind an agreement, or were you concerned that there were divisions among the Commission that might be difficult to overcome?
- Muna: Yes, that's right. We believed that there would be a division if we didn't sit down and discuss among ourselves. But eventually we decided to continue and just see what happened.
- Willens: Were there some members of the Commission whom you did not know well and whom you thought might not go along with the majority?
- Muna: Yes, of course. For instance, Rabauliman.
- Willens: Did you think the Carolinian community did not share the same aspirations as the Popular Party?
- Muna: I can say that is true, because we had this confrontation when we were among ourselves discussing some issues. But that is healthy, you know. You don't expect everybody to agree.
- Willens: From Rota, there were Benjamin Manglona and Joannes Taimanao. You told us the other day that you had run against Benjamin for the Congress of Micronesia. Had you worked with him in later years before you both found yourself on the Commission?

- Muna: Yes, I had worked together very closely with Benjamin. Although we ran against each other, that doesn't mean that he's my adversary. No, that's not true. I accepted the result of the election because he was the favorite son of Rota, and I just accepted that.
- Willens: Did you regard Benjamin as a strong supporter of the commonwealth objective?
- Muna: Yes. In the beginning, yes. Because he also believed in this political status for the people, and together Rota, Tinian and Saipan and the Northern Islands, if they united together, then we can have a united force. But Rota by itself cannot.
- Willens: Do you have any recollection of Joannes and what he said or did during the work of the Commission?
- Muna: Was it Joannes, the first one?
- Willens: Well, there's some uncertainty in the record about whether Gregory Calvo was on the Commission or not. Do you remember Gregory Calvo from Rota being on the Commission?
- Muna: That's the reason why I'm asking you, because I was trying to recollect. Taimanao later on became a member. I don't know whether he was originally a member at the beginning.
- Willens: How about the two members from Tinian who were then Herman Manglona and Francisco Hocog? Had you worked with either of them before?
- Muna: Yes, I did work with them before.
- Willens: What was their political party affiliation?
- Muna: Well, the political party affiliation was the Territorial affiliation. The problem with that was that the people of Tinian, especially Manglona, didn't want to make any mistakes and he didn't want to make a decision. That's the reason why when the U.S. proposal to take two-thirds of Tinian and to move the village from the harbor area, he had a problem with that. He wanted to wash his hands so that he would not be blamed if there was a problem for his people.
- Willens: Do you think that's one of the reasons why he was replaced later on by Joe Cruz?
- Muna: Yes. He was the one who resigned, not really replaced. He wanted somebody else to represent Tinian. That's the reason why Joe Cruz came in, the late Joe Cruz.
- Willens: Another development at the very end of the first session arose when the Joint Communique was being drafted. The draft Communique said that the Northern Marianas was seeking a permanent relationship with the United States, and Dr. Palacios objected to the use of the word "permanent", and that required a recess and the Commission had to try to work out some compromise that would satisfy Dr. Palacios and the United States Delegation. Do you have any recollection of that development?
- Muna: Yes, I have. That's when we started thinking about what Dr. Palacios was concerned about permanent. Then you gave us also your advice that the United States would not agree to any other relationship except a permanent relationship. But then we came out with the mutual consent provision for Article 1.
- Willens: You think then that Dr. Palacios was satisfied with the compromise?
- Muna: I think so. That's right.
- Willens: After the first round, the Commission instructed the consultants, both the legal consultants (my firm) and Jim Leonard, to prepare reports on some of the issues before the second session. Had you met Jim Leonard before?

- Muna: No, not really. That's the only time that I met him, when he was introduced as an advisor for land and whatever.
- Willens: Based on your experience with Jim Leonard during the course of the Commission's work, what was your assessment of him as a person?
- Muna: I thought he was sincere. He was hard working.
- Willens: Did you find the reports that he submitted useful for the Commission to consider?
- Muna: Yes, it was useful at that time, yes. Based on that, we also made some input into that report.
- Willens: The United Nations sent another visiting mission to the Northern Marianas in February 1973 between the first and the second round. Do you have any recollection of meeting with members of the visiting mission in February 1973 to discuss the separate negotiations?
- Muna: Yes. I still remember there was this session between the United Nations visiting mission and the members of the Marianas Political Status Commission.
- Willens: Did you speak up at that meeting?
- Muna: No, I didn't.
- Willens: Who were the members of the Commission who would carry the ball in talking at meetings like that?
- Muna: Mostly the Chairman, Eddie Pangelinan, and Dr. Palacios, Ben Santos, Ben Manglona.
- Willens: Do you recall anything that was said by the U.N. visiting mission about the fact that the United States and the Marianas were now engaged in separate negotiations?
- Muna: They were not completely in agreement to that, but unfortunately it was going on. We told them that this was what the people wanted and we needed their support.
- Willens: Did you ever have a fear that the United Nations might bring pressure on the United States to stop the negotiations?
- Muna: No, I don't think so. I didn't have that feeling, because I had been to the U.N. Council myself several times as a petitioner. And I didn't have bad feelings.
- Willens: In the spring, the second session began in May of 1973, and the consultants came out early with reports on political status and economic needs and other land issues. There were some informal meetings among the members of the Commission with the consultants before the formal negotiations began. Did you find that a useful way of doing business, to meet with the consultants first and review the papers?
- Muna: Of course. That's the first step that you should do in any negotiation. That's the reason why you came up with the options and authorities that we have to look into. And that's very helpful.
- Willens: Did you feel that the members of the Commission understood the issues, which sometimes got very complicated—issues like sovereignty and applicability of federal laws? Were these issues that you felt you could come to understand and deal with?
- Muna: Initially, when you say sovereignty, you know you have to look at that word first. Then you have to understand that it was a basic principle for the U.S. government. Remember we used to have like a fall-back position in which if the U.S. government cannot accept whatever we agree upon, then there is something that we can fall back and submit the second proposal that we have.

- Willens: As a general strategy, the Commission would sometimes offer a position trying to get agreement, but if the United States did not agree, there would always be a fall-back position that the Commission would then advance.
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: There was an early informal meeting with James Wilson, who was at that time I think the Deputy to Ambassador Williams. Do you have any specific recollections of Mr. Wilson and how he interacted with the Commission?
- Muna: No, I don't. I know him, but I don't think I had met him early on. Maybe some members of the Commission did, but I didn't.
- Willens: Who were the members of the U.S. delegation that you feel you got to know the best? Some of the younger people like Jim Berg or Adrian deGraffenried or some of the military people like Col. Smith, Col. Kenty, Col. McCarthy, Col. Strait? Do you remember having personal conversations with any of these people?
- Muna: No.
- Willens: Did you feel that any of them were searching you out at receptions and meetings in order to try to persuade you to agree to the U.S. position?
- Muna: Yes, they were doing that.
- Willens: Did they do that regularly?
- Muna: Yes. They ducked you into the corner and then started talking about the issue and tried to put across what they believed would be acceptable to them. I don't think that was proper, really.
- Willens: Did they try to persuade you that the Commission's positions that were being taken were unwise or overreaching.
- Muna: Something like that, yes.
- Siemer: Did they try to find out what you personally thought about the issues?
- Muna: Yes. And most of us told them what we felt, and the reason why we wanted this.
- Willens: We have learned that there was sort of a deliberate strategy of asking members of the delegation to have personal conversations with individual members of the Commission.
- Muna: That's what they were doing every time we had like a reception or recess or something like that.
- Willens: Did you try to persuade them that the Commission positions were correct and that they ought to change their position?
- Muna: Yes, that's supposed to be my position, you know, because I have to agree with the other members also, that this is our position.
- Willens: Do you think that the members of the Commission generally stood together as a unit after they got working together for a while?
- Muna: Yes, that's true, because without that I don't think we would be successful.
- Willens: And when the Commission members would get together again, did you exchange reports as to who had contacted you and what they had said?
- Muna: No, it's not necessary.

- Willens: Because everyone knew what was going on?
- Muna: Yes, but we don't get together and try to get whatever they are trying to tell us. I don't think we have done that. I think we accept that everybody knows what to do.
- Willens: The day before the formal sessions opened in May 1973, the *Pacific Daily News* had a very large headline saying "Navy Seeks All of Tinian" or something to that effect. Do you remember that massive coverage?
- Muna: Yes. That's why Herman Manglona was really mad.
- Willens: Was he mad about that particular headline, or was he mad because it was made public, or what?
- Muna: He was mad because it was made public, and he was still a member at that time and that's the reason why he was really mad because he's telling the public that they have nothing to do with that.
- Willens: That he and the Commission had nothing to do with it, is that what he said?
- Muna: Yes, and that's not true. He was trying to convince the people there that that was not true. And that's even a surprise to all of us. I believe that [release of information about Tinian] was made by Malone.
- Willens: By whom?
- Muna: Remember this Peace Corps guy, Malone?
- Willens: It was a leak of some kind.
- Muna: Yes. But remember this Peace Corps volunteer, Mike Malone?
- Willens: Mike Malone?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: Well he's still on the island.
- Muna: He's still on the island, right. He's working with the Legislature.
- Willens: You think he wrote the story, or he released the information?
- Muna: He released information about the plan on Tinian, really.
- Willens: Is that right?
- Muna: That's right. He was always trying to get something from us. And he was trying to get some of the copies [of papers] that we had, but I don't know who gave it to him.
- Willens: So you don't know whether anyone on the Commission gave him the information?
- Muna: I don't know, that's for sure.
- Willens: Were you surprised by the scope of the U.S. request?
- Muna: Yes, because we didn't even come to that yet. We were surprised that it came out open in the paper.
- Willens: What was your initial reaction to the request? Were you prepared to consider leasing the entire island of Tinian, or did you feel that the United States would have to cut back on its request?

- Muna: I felt that the United States would have to cut back in order to accommodate the people there, because the people had been living there for decades, and that's their home. You just don't take them away and put them someplace else.
- Willens: Were you personally opposed to the idea of relocating the village?
- Muna: Yes. Were you're talking about relocating the people from the island or from the village?
- Willens: Well, that's a good point. The very first proposal from the United States was to take the people off the entire island in essence.
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: And then they cut back and modified the proposal and said that they would move the village. So I gather from what you say that you were opposed to taking the people off the island.
- Muna: That's right. I was really against that, because you're doing them a disservice, really.
- Willens: The United States suggested that relocating the village would produce better housing, better utilities, better services for the Tinian residents. Did you agree with that?
- Muna: Yes, I agreed with that. The basis that the people would have a better environment, better housing, better facilities, not like what they had at that time in San Jose Harbor area. But then we decided that we had to talk to the people before we could make that decision. We had public meetings there several times.
- Willens: What do you remember about the public meetings on Tinian?
- Muna: They were really opposed to that.
- Willens: To the relocation?
- Muna: Right. So then there's nothing we could do but to accept that they are not to be relocated but to stay where they are. And the United States military was not too happy about that, because if they have a ship going into the harbor with ammunition, whatever, and if that explodes, then it would hurt the people. So that's a problem, and that's the reason probably why the United States agreed to move loading and unloading of the ships to the northern part of the island.
- Willens: To a different location so as to eliminate the need for relocating the village, is that what you remember?
- Muna: Right. On that subject, later on the people of Tinian started to move. They put up a petition, but it was too late.
- Willens: You think they changed their mind ultimately and that they would have liked to have relocated the village?
- Muna: Right, but the agreement was just about to be signed and everything, so . . .
- Willens: Do you have any recollection of the meeting on Tinian where Ambassador Williams and military representatives stood up and made a presentation and answered questions?
- Muna: Not really.
- Willens: Do you think the U.S. delegation was effective in presenting their case?
- Muna: They were effective in presenting their case, but you have to understand the local people also. They had their own priorities. It was a good discussion between the people of Tinian and the Ambassador and the other representatives.

- Siemer: Did you have any relatives in Tinian at the time?
- Muna: Cousins. I don't have a brother or sister there, but Herman Manglona is my first cousin.
- Willens: There was some indication in the newspaper coverage that the local residents who were at the meeting were divided. The suggestion is that some of the older people favored the military coming in and relocating the village, but some of the younger, better-educated residents were strongly opposed to this effort. What is your recollection?
- Muna: I think some of the people accepted the proposal that was presented. But it's not only the old people. Some of the old people didn't want that. It wasn't really a split, 50-50. That's not true.
- Willens: What do you think the split was initially? What do you think the sentiment of the Tinian people was?
- Muna: Well, the sentiment at that time was that it was just something that was new for them, and they said that we need to give them time to think. But the division was there.
- Siemer: Was the split more along family lines, the Flemings and the Mendiolas on one side and the Manglonas and others having a different idea?
- Muna: You mentioned about Mendiolas. Yes, he was very vocal against the military moving the people.
- Willens: He was elected Mayor just at about this time and took over from Mayor Antonio Borja. And Mayor Mendiola was, as you saw, very outspoken. Why do you think he had such strong views on the subject?
- Muna: I am not too sure. I don't know really. But he had this PA system on the island and used that to talk to the people about the disadvantages of moving, this and that.
- Siemer: No. It's in several areas.
- Siemer: So he would go out and make speeches over the public address system?
- Muna: No, from his office.
- Willens: He could sit in his office and address the entire island?
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: That's very effective.
- Siemer: Once he took a position, would the rest of the Mendiola family go along with his position?
- Muna: Yes. When the people will not move, and I think they say that they have a victory there, and then they start to change their attitude toward the military.
- Willens: The differences after a while developed into an opposition that said that the United States should not get more than one-third of Tinian, whereas the United States eventually cut back its request to two-thirds. Did you feel that there was any chance of persuading the United States to cut back its request further than the two-thirds?
- Muna: No, I didn't think so, because they said that they wanted the whole island. Then they decided that after so much opposition that two-thirds of the island would be okay. And that's where we came in, that's when we went to the people, that's when the late Joe Cruz was very vocal about agreeing to the two-thirds of the island.

- Willens: It was a very political and sensitive issue. There were those on Tinian who said that the people on Tinian ought to decide whether to give the land and not let the Commission make that decision for them. Did you and the other members of the Commission feel that it was your responsibility to decide this issue?
- Muna: No, we had to decide that with the people, to try to convince them that since we are to become U.S. citizens, be part of the United States, that it is our responsibility to provide whatever our government needs for defense purposes. I think we convinced them of that. And especially their delegation, like Joe Cruz, was very outspoken and then the people understood that.
- Willens: There was another change in the membership of the Commission from Tinian when Bernard Hofschneider replaced Mr. Hocog.
- Muna: Right. Frank Hocog.
- Willens: Did Mr. Hofschneider play any leadership role on Tinian that you can recall?
- Muna: He was very quiet, but supportive.
- Willens: Did he and Joe Cruz always work together as a team?
- Muna: Yes. He listened to Joe.
- Willens: Joe was pretty much the leader of the Tinian delegation then?
- Muna: Yes, that's true.
- Willens: The United States initially requested that the land be purchased, not leased, and the Commission took a very firm position that it could only be leased. Did you have strong feelings on that subject?
- Muna: Yes, because when you lease, there's a limitation as to ownership. The lease would expire. But when you purchase, that's like a fee simple, so it's different.
- Willens: Did you think that the United States ultimately would change its position?
- Muna: Yes, because we were insistent on no outright purchase. Remember we requested only 50 years, but the United States said no? We have to give them another fifty years. So we agreed to that.
- Willens: During that second session in May there was a lot of debate about political status, and during this session the United States sort of agreed to the concept of mutual consent. Did you attach importance to that particular element of the agreement?
- Muna: Yes, of course. That's very important. The reason for that is we looked at Guam, and there was no such thing like a mutual consent provision. Guam is like the creature of the U.S. Congress. They are at the mercy of the United States Congress, and that's the reason why we wanted something that would protect us. The U.S. Congress cannot take away our citizenship, the United States Congress cannot change these other provisions like the political relationship. They cannot change without us agreeing to those changes.
- Willens: Do you remember whether the United States opposed that idea in the beginning?
- Muna: Yes, that's right.
- Willens: The report that my firm submitted to the Commission looked at Puerto Rico and Guam and the Virgin Islands and American Samoa and made some general recommendations for the Commission to consider. Was there any particular model that you thought the commonwealth here should try to follow?

- Muna: Yes. We were convinced that we should follow Puerto Rico, but the problem Puerto Rico had was they didn't negotiate with the United States about their political status. This is something that was new for us, to sit down and negotiate, and this was an opportunity for us to reach out for various relationships with the United States not articulated in previous arrangements like Puerto Rico. Only in name.
- Siemer: Had anyone on the Commission actually been to Puerto Rico?
- Muna: Yes.
- Siemer: Who had?
- Muna: I forgot, but there were two of them that went to Puerto Rico. I didn't go there because I had been to Puerto Rico.
- Siemer: So people [on the Commission] actually had experience, had talked to the people in Puerto Rico.
- Muna: Yes, about the government and whatever.
- Willens: Ben Santos went there at an earlier age in about 1963 as part of a leadership grant. Maybe Dr. Palacios went? I'm not sure.
- Muna: But this is something for us to understand, because we want people also to find out how the Puerto Rican people felt about commonwealth and whether it was good for them or not.
- Willens: Do you remember the United States delegation advising the Commission that Puerto Rico was not a good precedent to follow and that the U.S. Congress would not accept it?
- Muna: Yes, that's right.
- Willens: Did you believe them?
- Muna: No, I don't think so. That's the reason why we presented to them what we wanted within the commonwealth concept.
- Willens: Did anyone on the U.S. delegation ever tell you that the Commission really should be satisfied with something like an organic act as applied to Guam and that that should be sufficient?
- Muna: No, that's not true. The reason they accepted us for separate negotiations was because we told them that we wanted a permanent relationship; we wanted something that is good for our people. We understand about Guam. You see, maybe the reason why they wanted us to change our position was because for so many years we had been having plebiscites here for unification of the Marianas with Guam, and maybe they didn't know if we were done entirely with them. Fortunately, we are lucky that we pursued this commonwealth.
- Willens: Do you think that some members of the U.S. delegation still thought that reunification with Guam was possible within the next five or ten years?
- Muna: That's what they had in mind by giving us a commonwealth status, that maybe later on Guam and the Northern Marianas would be under one status, like commonwealth, for example. But I don't know whether that's going to work or not right now.
- Willens: It's twenty years later, and it doesn't look like there's much chance of it in the near future.

- Muna: And I still remember Phil Burton advising Tony Won Pat to support this because eventually the Northern Marianas and Guam would be together.
- Willens: Who did you hear that from?
- Muna: I have heard that from Phil Burton advising Tony Won Pat. I remember Tony Won Pat when he presented his speech at the Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, he didn't support us.
- Willens: He supported . . .
- Muna: No. He did not support us. He was mad.
- Willens: Was this after the Covenant had been signed and it was pending before Congress?
- Muna: Right.
- Willens: You recall Won Pat opposing the agreement with the Northern Marianas?
- Muna: Yes. But then the following day when the Committee report was out, everything was just changed.
- Willens: He changed his views?
- Muna: They changed it for him.
- Willens: Do you have any reason to believe that Phil Burton told Won Pat that if he supported the Covenant, that ultimately Guam would have the same status as the Northern Marianas would have under the Covenant?
- Muna: No, that's not . . .
- Willens: You never heard that?
- Muna: No. I have heard something like eventually Guam and the Northern Marianas would be one. Because the United States Congress agreed to the Covenant for the Marianas. The problem I have seen, that is really a disadvantage to us, is on one group of islands [Guam and the Northern Marianas] you have two separate identities [territory and commonwealth]. That's my concern at the beginning.
- Willens: It was your concern?
- Muna: Yes. And I thought that might be an obstacle for the U.S. Congress to approve the Covenant.
- Willens: If Phil Burton told Won Pat that ultimately there would be some reintegration, that could be viewed as a suggestion that Guam would come in under the same status, but it doesn't necessarily mean that.
- Muna: Yes, maybe that's it, but that's why we were surprised. Then at the same time Burton told us that he was going to take care of that.
- Willens: On the political status issue, there also arose for the first time, during this second round, a question of the Territorial Clause, Article IV, Section 3, clause 2 of the U.S. Constitution. That became a subject of a lot of debate over the next several rounds, mostly involving the lawyers. Do you have any recollection of the Territorial Clause debate within the Commission?
- Muna: Yes, I recall that.
- Willens: What's your recollection?

- Muna: There were questions about that Territorial Clause, because when the United States was considering us as a territory that's when that clause was applied. But at the same time, the commonwealth relationship with the United States is something that is conflict with the Territorial Clause. But to tell you the truth, we discussed that among ourselves. I don't know who was lying, but later on we accepted the fact that we are like a territory although we are a Commonwealth of the United States.
- Willens: Well, that's correct. But the concern that your lawyers had was that if the Territorial Clause applied without any limitation, the U.S. Congress could pass laws here in the Commonwealth affecting local government.
- Muna: Yes, but we had the provision of the Covenant that for anything that would affect us, there should be a consultation.
- Willens: Did you feel then that, as the negotiations resulted, the Territorial Clause was going to be limited so far as it applied to the Northern Marianas?
- Muna: When you say limited . . .
- Willens: Let's put it this way. Were you concerned that the U.S. Congress was going to interfere with local matters here? Was that a subject of concern to you?
- Muna: It was a concern to me, but I believed that if that [clause] is not applicable, then we have a problem with the United States Congress with [approval of] the Covenant. So in essence, we agree.
- Willens: How about the citizenship issue? Was acquiring U.S. citizenship an important objective that you and the other members of the Commission had?
- Muna: Yes, that was one of the reasons why we wanted to become part of the United States.
- Willens: Why was it that there were some people who were reluctant to acquire citizenship and that resulted in this debate about national status?
- Muna: Just to delay the negotiations, nothing else.
- Willens: Is that what you recall?
- Muna: Nobody came out openly and decided to be U.S. nationals. Nobody.
- Willens: Is that right?
- Muna: Even up to now.
- Willens: It was a view attributed as I recall to some elder members of the community, including some Carolinians who thought that becoming a U.S. citizen would be an act of disloyalty to their relatives in the Carolines. Do you remember anything of that kind?
- Muna: No, that's not true. Like I have said, the reason why they came up with that strategy was to continue debating the Covenant and to delay, and that's the reason why we came out with accepting their position. If they do not want [U.S. citizenship], then they become U.S. national. But nobody came forward and declared that they did not want to U.S. citizens, they want to be U.S. nationals. Nobody.
- Willens: On the question of economics, which came up for the first time in this second round, there were some proposals made for transitional planning, and then Jim Leonard helped the Commission formulate a position as to how much future support it needed from the United States. What were you most concerned with on the economic front?

- Muna: My main concern with the financial system was the financial assistance that can be guaranteed to the Northern Marianas. And then after that, when we have that guarantee, then we can come out and open up the island for economic development.
- Willens: Were you concerned in particular about infrastructure needs that had to be met in the Northern Marianas?
- Muna: Yes. That's the reason why we had set aside for CIP money—infrastructure money for roads, for power plant, for sewer, for schools.
- Willens: Did you think that the Trust Territory Administration had not had sufficient funds to devote to infrastructure and that you would get more money as part of the United States?
- Muna: No, that's not the reason really. We were not thinking about that. We were really more concerned with our political status than with infrastructure or what have you. Saipan is blessed a little more than the other parts of the Trust Territory because the U.S. Navy was here during the war. This is where the bulk of the American activities were centered, and we have the roads, we have all over the island Quonset huts erected, so we have some of the material that we can use for our people. Of course we understood the need for development, and the need for infrastructures. But really the main thing was the political aspiration of our people. It's not something else like talking about infrastructure, economic development. Because eventually when you are part of the United States, then you can come in and start economic development for the people.
- Willens: That's an interesting point. Is it your judgment that being part of the United States would provide more incentives and security for foreign investors to come in than if you had stayed part of the entire Trust Territory?
- Muna: That's very true, because we felt that investors would be secure if we are part of the United States.
- Willens: After the second round of negotiations, there was an interview published in the *Marianas Variety* of three Commission members—Felix Rebauliman, Joeten, and Dr. Palacios. They said in the interview that they thought the Commission was moving too fast, that the United States was much more expert in negotiations than the Commission was, and that they just generally were apprehensive about what was happening. Do you recall reading about that interview?
- Muna: Yes, I recall reading about that. But I personally felt that that was their own personal opinion.
- Willens: Do you think that was fostered by the Territorial Party?
- Muna: No, I don't think so, because the Territorial Party at that time was represented on the Commission, and some of them were supportive of the Commission effort. Of course, in any negotiation you have people who are not too satisfied with what's going on. I have read that, and I just personally said to myself, that's their own personal opinion.
- Siemer: What did other members of the Commission say to those three about that interview?
- Muna: We accepted what they said in the interview, and we respected that. That was their opinion. But naturally every time we met together, we just talked about it, so we could change their mind.
- Willens: Did you feel that you were at a disadvantage in negotiating against a U.S. delegation

- headed by an Ambassador and with representatives there from the Defense Department, State Department, Justice Department and so forth?
- Muna: For us? No, I didn't feel disadvantaged, because I wanted to find out what they had in mind, what their proposal was, and what they wanted.
- Willens: Do you recall Joe Screen?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: Did you work with Joe Screen in any of his many capacities out here?
- Muna: Yes. We used Joe Screen initially when we established the Commission because Joeten wanted Joe to be with him to advise him on our discussions and our approach to this negotiation.
- Willens: So he was listed as a consultant originally to the Commission.
- Muna: To the Commission, particularly to Joeten.
- Willens: Do you know whether Joe Screen was involved in persuading Felix and Dr. Palacios and Joeten to give an interview along the lines that I've summarized?
- Muna: I don't know about that.
- Willens: What happened to Joe Screen in terms of helping the Commission?
- Muna: When Joeten resigned, the Commission finally got rid of him.
- Willens: When Joeten resigned from the Commission, he wrote a letter stating that he was resigning in part because he didn't have time, but also because he was afraid that his position on the Commission would be seen as defending his economic interests. What was your reaction to his resignation and his reasons for it?
- Muna: You are right. That's the reason he gave us for his resignation. He used that as his reason for resigning. I think that's the reason.
- Siemer: What did you think about that reason—that his business interests would affect the people's view of the Covenant or their willingness to approve it?
- Muna: Joeten was a businessman, one of the businessmen on the island, and I know he's too busy taking care of his business. At the same time, he has to look after his interests, and maybe he doesn't want to be accused of taking advantage of the negotiations for his personal business. We accepted that.
- Siemer: How much of your time did the Commission work actually take?
- Muna: Two and a half years.
- Siemer: During the time that the U.S. delegation was here on the island, typically how much time would you spend on Commission work?
- Muna: The time frame was two and a half years, but that doesn't mean that you work for two and a half years.
- Siemer: If the U.S. delegation was here on island and negotiations were actually going on, how much time would you typically spend on Commission work?
- Muna: About one week.
- Siemer: And then when the negotiations were not going on and the U.S. delegation was not here on island, did you have to spend time on Commission work then?

- Muna: Yes. From time to time we met to discuss this what we're going to do, you know. Because when the United States gave us their position, that does not mean that we just fall back and forget about it. We have to study that.
- Willens: Weren't you assigned to one of the committees at some point? Did you serve on the Land Committee?
- Muna: Yes, I served on the Land Committee. But eventually Pete Tenorio was given that committee for him to handle.
- Willens: Pete A. Tenorio was the replacement for Joeten.
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: Had you worked with Mr. Tenorio before?
- Muna: I knew him since he was young. I was associated with him, yes.
- Willens: Do you have any recollection of any particular views that he brought to the Commission's work?
- Muna: Yes, he was very active really, but he was pro-American, so no problem with that.
- Willens: He was from the Territorial Party, was he not?
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: And then later on he ran against Eddie in the 1974 election. But the fact that he was from the Territorial Party was not a problem in your mind, so far as his work on the Commission?
- Muna: No, I had no problem with that.
- Willens: After this round, during the summer of 1973 the United States announced sort of unilaterally a moratorium on homestead and economic development on Tinian. Do you recall that moratorium issue?
- Muna: Moratorium?
- Willens: They issued a statement saying there could be no more land transfers or development on Tinian because of the uncertainty about the military lease and so forth.
- Muna: Oh, that's a moratorium for homesteading on those areas that the military wants to take.
- Willens: Did you think that was a good idea or a bad idea?
- Muna: I thought that was a good idea.
- Willens: Why?
- Muna: Because once you negotiate to do something, and you start giving away those parcels of land for the homesteaders, then you are not negotiating with good faith.
- Willens: There was concern at the time about members of the Commission and others engaging in land transactions on Tinian in order to gain some personal profit. Do you know of any such land transactions?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: Did that take place?
- Muna: It took place, yes.

- Willens: Was there any discussion within the Commission when you were together about whether that was a good idea or a bad idea?
- Muna: Yes, we discussed that, but there was no way that you could stop it. For the record, I don't have any land on Tinian.
- Willens: Ambassador Williams and Mr. Wilson came out to Saipan in August 1973 to try to explain the moratorium, and they appeared before the District Legislature. Do you recall those meetings with either Ambassador Williams or Mr. Wilson on the moratorium issue?
- Muna: Yes, we discussed that. I think they presented a precise presentation for us to understand. I appreciated that, because like I've said, when you are doing something and then you are going behind my back, then there's something wrong there.
- Siemer: You were still in the District Legislature at that time?
- Muna: Yes.
- Siemer: What did you do to keep your colleagues in the District Legislature informed about what the Commission was doing?
- Muna: We invited all the Commission members in; we had an open session.
- Siemer: What did you think about the level of support that there was in the District Legislature at that time for the Commission?
- Muna: It was 100% support. The District Legislature was funding the Commission.
- Siemer: It was a big advantage I take it having you there as a member of the District Legislature and a member of the Commission.
- Muna: Yes, that's true.
- Willens: Do you remember the decision of the Commission to publish the various position papers that were exchanged at the second round in a report to the Legislature which made it all part of the public record? Do you remember any discussion within the Commission about whether you should publish these position papers or whether you should keep them confidential, which is what the U.S. delegation wanted?
- Muna: Yes, we discussed that, but we liked to make it confidential. And then of course they would know about it in the Communique that was agreed upon by both sides. I think that's a good idea.
- Willens: The papers did become public, though.
- Muna: Yes, right.
- Willens: Did you think it was a good idea to let the people know in some detail what you were trying to accomplish?
- Muna: Prior to the negotiations?
- Willens: No, after the Joint Communique, to give a detailed report.
- Muna: Oh yes, after the Joint Communique comes out openly to the public, then that's when we'll come in to explain what it means.
- Willens: At the third round of negotiations in December 1973, the United States presented to the Commission something called a draft Covenant, and they asked the Commission to

respond. What was your reaction, if you remember having any, when the United States presented a draft agreement across the table?

Muna: My first reaction was "Great; now we're getting someplace." Because that's their response. But that doesn't mean that we have to agree completely with that. To me personally, that means that they are sincere in their negotiation with us. It means that we're getting someplace.

Willens: Did any members of the U.S. delegation come to you after that Covenant had been presented across the table and ask you whether you agreed with it or had any problems with it?

Muna: No, not to my knowledge.

Willens: Also at the third round, a series of issues was presented dealing with the customs laws and immigration laws and tax laws. Do you remember what kind of federal laws were of concern to you that you wanted to protect against?

Muna: My first concern was the Jones Act.

Willens: Why was that of concern to you?

Muna: Because I had read about the problem of Guam and some other territorial areas, and if we can get rid of that, then we're much better off.

Willens: What other areas of federal law were of concern to you?

Muna: The benefits for our people.

Willens: The social security benefits and things of that sort?

Muna: Yes.

Willens: Was immigration an issue within the Commission during these negotiations?

Muna: It was an issue, but we did put those [provisions] in so that we could control immigration and so that we can control also the customs. I don't know, at that time, I thought it was a great idea, but now I'm getting nervous about that.

Siemer: How did members of the Commission feel about the level of alien workers in the Commonwealth back in those days?

Muna: The impact of alien workers in those days was very minimal. That's the reason why I asked about alien workers on the island. We thought they could become permanent residents, and you came out with the definition of a domicile and said that that would take care of them. But somehow giving the Commonwealth the authority to grant a green card [permanent residency], that's a problem that we are confronting now.

Willens: How about the tax laws? Were you aware that the Internal Revenue Code applied in Guam as sort of a territorial tax but that the proceeds were kept by the Guamanian government?

Muna: Yes, we requested that, too. Then we got it. But we also made sure that we had the right to give a rebate back to our people.

Willens: Where did the idea of rebates come from, do you remember?

Muna: It's from among the members of the Commission. That's the idea that was presented for us to have the opportunity or the right to give back a rebate to our people in case they need the rebates.

- Willens: At this round of negotiations, the United States made its first financial proposal. It offered the Commission guaranteed funding in the amount of \$11.5 million, putting federal programs aside. They explained this as being about a 50% increase above what the district government was getting under the TTPI. What was your reaction to this first U.S. proposal?
- Muna: My first reaction was that it was a proposal that was better than the present Trust Territory government. But looking at what we did not have and looking at the standard of living of our people, I thought that that was not enough for us to make our people's standard of living go up, to make it the same as the people of the United States. So that amount was not enough really, although I personally felt that it was a proposal that was much better than the Trust Territory government.
- Willens: Was it your hope that over time the living standards here in the Northern Marianas would be roughly the same as an average mainland community?
- Muna: Yes, that's the reason why we requested more than \$11 million. Because I remember that time the Marianas District was getting close to \$6 million for operation, and that was really not enough.
- Willens: How did the Commission go about presenting its case that it needed more money? Do you have any recollection of how the Commission decided to present its arguments to the U.S. delegation?
- Muna: Yes, by presenting to them the needs of the island, the needs of the people, not only for Tinian and Rota, but for Saipan. We certainly presented to them that this was not enough. We talked about the power plant for \$5 million, and the hospital needed \$15-20 million.
- Willens: Do you remember all these subjects being brought up by individual members of the Commission speaking to the U.S. delegation?
- Muna: That's right. That's the reason why we told them that this was not enough.
- Willens: Do you recall any reaction from the Ambassador or other members to these representations by Commission members?
- Muna: They were really receptive, because we presented them with all of these needs for our people. Maybe in the beginning they were not too receptive. But then maybe they sat down and talked about it, and we talked about it too. Maybe that's why we got a better deal.
- Willens: Did you have the sense as a politician that the initial offer from the United States was just a bargaining start and that ultimately there would be some meeting of the minds?
- Muna: That's right. The United States even presented to us that if the U.S. military established on Tinian, we're talking about military personnel stationed there, maybe we could get more than \$5 million from there.
- Willens: Well, that's a good point. The United States did emphasize repeatedly the economic benefits that would come from construction of a base.
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: Did the Commission members want to ignore that because they were not sure that a base would ultimately be built, or did that influence your judgment as to how much money was needed?

- Muna: Yes, it had some influence on me, taking into consideration the taxes that the military personnel will be paying to the Commonwealth, but it did not materialize.
- Willens: Did you have the impression that a military base was in fact going to be built on Tinian shortly after an agreement was entered into between the parties?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: What did you base that impression on?
- Muna: Because of the immediate need for the land and for military expansion.
- Willens: Did Ambassador Williams or any member of the U.S. delegation tell you or the Commission as a whole that the base was going to be built?
- Muna: That was the assumption, yes, because they were presenting us with the financial or economic benefits from the military personnel. The money was there—over \$5 million.
- Willens: It was at this round that the United States did announce that it had revised its plans for the ammunition loading need and no longer had to relocate San Jose Village. What was your reaction to that?
- Muna: Well, great, because that means that the Tinian village would not be moved, because that's what they wanted.
- Willens: You said earlier that when the people on Tinian heard about that, some of them were unhappy with that change in plans.
- Muna: Yes, and it was too late for the changes to be made.
- Willens: The next round of negotiations took place in the spring of 1974 and it was now reaching the point where people were looking to try to resolve these negotiations and try to come to agreement. One of the things that happened here was that the Commission presented its own draft status agreement across the table. It was called the Commonwealth Agreement. There was a long explanatory memo, and this had been with the Commission before the formal negotiations began. Do you recall what the reaction of the U.S. delegation was when the Commission handed across the table its own version of a status agreement?
- Muna: Yes, they said they wanted to look at it, and there was a recess.
- Willens: Were they upset?
- Muna: I don't know.
- Willens: Did anyone ever tell you that they were upset with this?
- Muna: My understanding at that time was that the Ambassador took over the communications [facility], so they can call Washington, and nobody else could call outside of the Commonwealth at that time. So there was consultation between Ambassador Williams and Washington.
- Willens: You heard about that?
- Muna: Yes, I heard about that, because those working at the communication facilities got instructions from the High Commissioner that that day is restricted only for the U.S. delegation on the island.
- Willens: The Ambassador from time to time would meet privately with Chairman Pangelinan and Vice Chairman Santos about developments in the negotiations. After these meetings, would Eddie or Ben inform the other members of the Commission what the Ambassador had said?

- Muna: Yes. I still remember Eddie and Ben Santos would call us all together and discuss what was said between them and the Ambassador.
- Willens: Do you have any recollection of Ed and Ben telling you that the Ambassador wanted the Commission to take back its draft status agreement and work with the draft Covenant that the U.S. delegation had provided earlier?
- Muna: They told us that that was what they wanted, but we said no.
- Willens: Did you have any concern that the strategy of presenting your own status agreement might have a backlash and might antagonize the Ambassador?
- Muna: Yes, we were aware of that.
- Willens: But you went ahead and did it.
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: Why did you go ahead and do it?
- Muna: Well, that was to counter—what do you call that—just to give him our proposal against their proposal.
- Willens: Was it your thought that ultimately the two delegations would meet and resolve the differences between the two proposals?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: At this fourth round of negotiations, there was some agreement on economics. The Commission came back and reduced its request from \$22 million to \$16 million. The United States was at \$11.5 million, but they came in and increased it, and ultimately agreement was reached. Were you generally satisfied with the agreement that came in? It was about \$13.5 million at that time.
- Muna: Yes. I was satisfied, because they accepted something in between. We have said to them this amount. And this is what they want. Then eventually we agreed to go in between.
- Willens: Did you attach much importance to the idea of having a guarantee that lasted more than one year? As it ended up, it was a guaranteed period of seven years. Was that aspect of the agreement important to you?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: Why was that?
- Muna: Because it gave us time to adjust, to work out a solution for us, and to be able to be self-sufficient.
- Willens: Did you think that the Commonwealth might be self-sufficient within a period as short as seven years?
- Muna: No, but there is a provision before the end of that financial assistance [section] so that we can always come in and request for an additional seven years.
- Willens: That's what happened, isn't it?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: Were you surprised that there was a provision ultimately for a second seven-year period of guaranteed U.S. assistance?
- Muna: Yes.

- Willens: Did you have the concern that the U.S. might cut back its assistance after the first seven years?
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: The two delegations also reached agreement at this round of negotiations on transitional planning, that is, planning for economic studies and a constitutional convention. What was your opinion of this transitional planning effort? Was that something of importance to you?
- Muna: Yes, there should be a transitional planning for the Northern Marianas prior to the approval of the Covenant. That was very important. Because it takes time for the United States Congress to approve it. There's a certain provision in the Covenant for the termination of the Trusteeship here, for us to be U.S. citizens. This is supposed to be a transitional period on that.
- Willens: At various times during the negotiations, the Commission raised the subject of separate administration. It wanted to be separated out from the rest of the Trust Territory. Ultimately the United States decided that it could not do that until the people had actually voted on the Covenant. Did you think that separate administration was important to obtain?
- Muna: That was our proposal really. But finally we accepted the fact that after the people approved the Covenant, then it was okay to have the separate administration. Eventually we agreed to the United States proposal that we should have this after the people accepted the Covenant, voted for it.
- Willens: As these negotiations continued through 1973 and 1974, was the Congress of Micronesia still opposing these separate negotiations?
- Muna: No. I don't recall that.
- Willens: Did you feel that the negotiations had progressed so far that they were going to come to completion even if the Congress of Micronesia opposed them?
- Muna: Yes, I believed that that was the case.
- Siemer: How comfortable were you at this time in May 1974 about the vote in the Marianas on the Covenant?
- Muna: I was very comfortable knowing that only three people didn't sign the Covenant agreement, and we had the support of more than the majority of the Territorial Party members of the Commission. So in a way, we looked it with confidence on my side that this was going to go through. I knew that it would be overwhelmingly voted for by the people, although there was opposition.
- Willens: Did you think it was important for the Commission to try to reach a consensus and if possible have all 15 members of the Commission agree to a final product?
- Muna: Yes, you want that to happen, but there's always a member who would not agree to everything that is in the Covenant. And that's what happened.
- Willens: In November 1974 there was an election at which both Ed Pangelinan and Herman Q. Guerrero were defeated by Oscar Rasa and Pete A. Tenorio. That required some changes in the membership of the Commission. At the time, there was some debate as to whether political status was an issue in that election that resulted in the defeat of Ed and Herman Q. Guerrero. What is your recollection of the issues in that November 1974 election?
- Muna: The people here had made up their minds as to the political issues about what they wanted

- with the United States. That election was most on a character and popularity basis. It had nothing to do with the Covenant.
- Willens: Some of the newspaper coverage at the time said that Oscar Rasa and Pete A. Tenorio were suggesting that the negotiations were going too fast, that there shouldn't be agreement, that more time was needed for political education. But is it your recollection that that was not really an important issue?
- Muna: For me, I could understand Oscar Rasa, he's using that as an issue. But Oscar Rasa at that time his popularity was really high.
- Willens: Why was he so popular?
- Muna: I don't know. People just liked the guy. And he talked very nice to everybody. Maybe that's the reason.
- Willens: We have heard that he was a very effective campaigner.
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: When he did come on the Commission, though, did you view him as a potential opponent of what had been negotiated up to that point?
- Muna: Yes, we considered him as a potential opponent. Among ourselves, I knew he would disagree with some of the provisions of the Covenant, but that doesn't mean that he was going to pressure all of us to vote with him. He knew in advance that it was very difficult for him to turn back what had been negotiated.
- Siemer: Oscar was a proponent of renegotiating a number of points, though. At least that's what he said after the Covenant was signed and during the campaign with respect to the plebiscite. What did he say about renegotiation when he joined the Commission?
- Muna: He could not make it happen inside, so he had to take that outside of the Commission. All of us had made up our minds that this is it. We listened to him, but it did not impress us that what he wanted really was for the good of the people. So that's the reason why we did not change. Remember he's the one who made the last proposal for those who do not want to become U.S. citizens and should declare themselves U.S. nationals?
- Willens: I think that was in the Agreement at that time, but I'm not sure.
- Muna: Yes, but he was the one who came up with that. Rather than making all the people citizens, you should give them a choice.
- Willens: He had family ties going back to Ponape, did he not?
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: Was he someone who thought that the whole idea of separate negotiations was wrong and that it would have been better for the Northern Marianas to remain part of all of Micronesia?
- Muna: That was still some of the feeling, yes, that's true.
- Willens: Did he have some special status in the Carolinian community because of his origins?
- Muna: No, that's not true. But the Carolinian community here, of course, supported him, knowing that he was from the Carolinian islands. You know all of these FSM [islands] and Palau are considered the Eastern Caroline Islands. The Carolinians from there considered him as having an ancestor from Caroline Islands, so of course they supported Oscar Rasa based on that.

- Willens: Were you reasonably comfortable that the Carolinian community would support the Covenant or that some portion of it would support the Covenant, or did you expect opposition from most of the Carolinians?
- Muna: No, not most of the Carolinians. The majority of them opposed the Covenant.
- Willens: Opposed the Covenant?
- Muna: Yes. The majority of them, but I believe a substantial number also supported it.
- Willens: Because of the election results, Herman Q. Guerrero went off the Commission. Oly Borja I think voluntarily withdrew in order to provide room for Eddie to stay on the Commission. Felipe Salas was appointed as a clerk in the court, so he left. But Oscar Rasa came on, and Juan Cabrera?
- Muna: Manny Sablan.
- Willens: Manny A. Sablan came on. Had you worked with Manny Sablan before?
- Muna: Yes. I had no problem with him; only Oscar.
- Willens: Was Manny Sablan someone who supported what had been done up to that point?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: Do you have any specific recollection of what contribution he made to the work of the Commission?
- Muna: When Manny Sablan came in, he looked at the product that we had, and he personally told me that it was great. He agreed to that.
- Willens: So you didn't anticipate any opposition from him?
- Muna: No; only from Oscar.
- Willens: At this round in December 1974, the United States finally agreed to lease rather than purchase the land, and there was agreement on price. What is your recollection about how the price was agreed to for leasing the land on Tinian and also some of the land on Saipan?
- Muna: At that time, to tell you the truth, the land here in the Marianas Islands was cheap really. We tried to make sure that if we didn't get the money for the land lease [right away], that by the time that the U.S. is ready to pay for it, it [the price] should be based on the inflation factor and whatever. That's the reason why we agreed to a price for the land.
- Willens: Did you think the price was a fair one at the time?
- Muna: For me it was fair.
- Willens: The United States also announced at this time that its plans for Tinian had changed and that there was not going to be any base constructed in the near future. What was your reaction to that announcement?
- Muna: Well, I thought it was okay, no problem. That meant the military would not be active here and that we would not be a target if there was a war, from Asia to here.
- Willens: That always was a concern, was it not, that if there was a base on Tinian that it would make the Marianas a military target?
- Muna: That's right. So when they announced that, I said no problem.

- Willens: But you said earlier that you had had the impression that the base was almost a sure thing.
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: Did this come as a surprise to you when the Ambassador announced this change in plans?
- Muna: Not really. That's why we didn't tell the Ambassador hey, wait. Why now? Not before? You told us this and that, but we don't respond to that, just let it go.
- Willens: The Commission did request some increase in funding as a result, and the United States agreed to \$500,000 per year more . . .
- Muna: For Tinian and Rota.
- Willens: Yes, devoted to special programs.
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: But it is your feeling that the Commission generally was not very surprised or upset by this?
- Muna: No.
- Willens: One of the significant developments that happened during that recess was that Rota and Tinian came to the members of the Commission and said that they would not agree to the Covenant as drafted unless it guaranteed that there would be a bicameral legislature in which the three major islands would be equally represented in the upper house. Do you remember that request?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: What was your reaction to it?
- Muna: My reaction to that was that they deserved to have that representation because for so many years when we have the District Legislature, the majority of the members of the Legislature are from Saipan. I can understand the reason why they were asking for that. They want real representation, they want protection, and because of our problem before, I don't blame them for asking that.
- Willens: Did you think that they had been short changed or not treated fairly in earlier years?
- Muna: Yes, that's true.
- Willens: Who do think stimulated this request on behalf of Rota and Tinian? Who was behind it?
- Muna: I believe Ben Manglona.
- Willens: Was there any disagreement within the Commission from the Saipan representatives on this request?
- Muna: The only disagreement was that we were not too sure whether the U.S. Congress would approve that provision making it like the United States Congress, similar to that structure. That's the only concern that we had.
- Willens: Do you remember any reaction in the U.S. delegation once the Commission presented this proposal to it for changing the Covenant?
- Muna: The U.S. delegation?
- Willens: Yes.

- Muna: Well, there was surprise really. I think they went ahead and discussed among themselves the possibility [of a problem] when the time came for them to present this to the United States Congress. But eventually they agreed to that, and we agreed also to that. I was talking about the short change for Tinian and Rota. It did not really affect Tinian at that time. I mean the delegation from Rota.
- Willens: It's more Rota?
- Muna: Yes. It's not Tinian. When I was talking about the District Legislature prior to this one, the short change was with Rota.
- Siemer: Why do you think that proposal came up at the very last minute? There had been two years before when Benjamin could have brought that up.
- Muna: Maybe what they had in mind was since this was the last chance. There's no turning back. They go for it or not. And that's the reason why they submitted it late in the negotiations.
- Willens: Do you think the Covenant would have been approved within the Northern Marianas if it did not contain this provision?
- Muna: I believe it would have been approved.
- Willens: But would it have been opposed on Rota?
- Muna: Not completely by the people of Rota, because I know the people of Rota also wanted to become part of the United States. You see for a long time they were closer to Guam. So many of their people were moving to Guam. I don't think they wanted to turn it down.
- Willens: But as a Commission member, you felt the request was a reasonable one, so you supported it?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: As I understand it, virtually all the Commission unanimously presented this proposal to the United States.
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: After that issue was resolved and some other minor drafting changes were made, the Commission then began the process of a final debate about whether to approve the Covenant and agree to a signing ceremony. What do you remember about the final deliberations of the Commission?
- Muna: In the final deliberation everybody seemed ready to stand for it except Oscar Rasa, I'm sorry to say this. I was proud of that.
- Willens: Do you remember that the process went on for two or three days with the Chairman going around the room asking individual members of the Commission what their problems were and what their attitudes were?
- Muna: That's right. Just to make sure that everybody agreed to the Covenant.
- Willens: He seemed to be very concerned to be sure that everyone felt they had an opportunity to express themselves. Was that generally the way in which he wanted to manage the Commission?
- Muna: Yes, I think that was a fair way to manage the Commission, so that there would be no doubt in everyone's mind at the last moment that this was it.

- Willens: On one evening when the Commission was meeting on the second floor of the Municipal Council Building, there were apparently some people outside on the veranda or the balcony. They were mostly dressed in black, and my recollection is they were mostly women looking in through the windows. Do you have any recollection of the vote of the Commission being observed by outsiders through the windows?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: How did that come about?
- Muna: The people knew that this was the final decision that would be made by the Commission, and maybe out of curiosity they wanted to find out who supported it and who didn't support it. But most of the people that came over were for the Covenant. This was like people coming in to show their support, to make sure that the Commission did their job, because this was what the people wanted.
- Willens: Was there a women's political organization at the time?
- Muna: Yes. You're talking about the Ladies Association.
- Willens: Was it affiliated with the Popular Party?
- Muna: It was affiliated with the Popular Party, yes.
- Willens: Is it your recollection that some of the people who came to see what was going on were from the Ladies Association?
- Muna: Yes. Most of them.
- Willens: Is it possible that some member of the Commission encouraged the Ladies Association to come and observe what went on?
- Muna: Yes, I'm sure.
- Willens: Did you?
- Muna: No. Ben Santos or Eddie.
- Willens: Did you have any women members of your family who were participants in that group?
- Muna: Yes, my sister was very active.
- Willens: Did she come and observe the voting?
- Muna: I'm sure she was there.
- Willens: Do you remember any member of the Commission raising a question to the Chairman to the effect that he was being intimidated by the fact that there were all these people out there watching him vote? Do you remember anything of that sort?
- Muna: Yes, that's right, but the ladies that came over didn't care whether somebody didn't like them there or not.
- Willens: I don't remember who expressed that fear. Do you?
- Muna: I think it was Oscar, because Oscar was very outspoken. He wasn't going to change his mind. Maybe he just said that to make us aware that those ladies were there to make sure that everybody voted for it.
- Willens: Is it your recollection that Oscar voted for the Covenant that evening but then subsequently changed his mind and did not sign?
- Muna: That's right.

- Willens: Do you recall what Felix's vote was?
- Muna: I'm not too sure. I know there was one abstention, but I don't know whether it was Felix or Oscar.
- Willens: When I talked to Felix a couple of years ago, when he saw me on the island, it was during a political campaign back in 1993, and he told his wife that Howard was back on the island to get him to sign the Covenant. So he was very good humored about it. After that event, there was the signing ceremony on February 15, but the night before the signing ceremony there was a lawsuit filed by Joe Mafnas to enjoin the signing.
- Muna: That's right.
- Willens: Did you ever discuss with Mr. Mafnas why he did that?
- Muna: I discussed that with him on several occasions. But he did that just to show the people that they could have that right, even after everybody agreed that somebody could go in and challenge that in court.
- Willens: Do you think it was supported by the Congress of Micronesia?
- Muna: I think so, because Mike White was there.
- Willens: Mike White was the lawyer for Mr. Mafnas.
- Muna: That's right and representing the Congress of Micronesia.
- Willens: Did you attend the hearing?
- Muna: No.
- Willens: Did people generally know that this lawsuit had been filed in an effort to stop the signing ceremony?
- Muna: Yes, people knew about that.
- Willens: What did you hear about the hearing and the final decision?
- Muna: People were very interested. When they went to the court house, they had hundreds and hundreds of people there. I was not there, but I had trust in you, so I had no problem with that.
- Willens: What do you remember about the signing ceremony itself? Describe the setting for me, if you can remember. Was it a sunny day? A happy occasion? What was your feeling at the time?
- Muna: It was a happy occasion, something that I had longed for for a long time. I was proud of it.
- Willens: After that, it was necessary to present the Covenant to the District Legislature, and as I recall, the Chairman and I and others spent two or three days with the District Legislature reviewing the Covenant. Do you remember any disagreement within the District Legislature about approving the Covenant?
- Muna: No, we didn't have any disagreement to that.
- Willens: As I recall, Larry Guerrero was a member of the District Legislature at the time, and he remembers asking a series of questions about it. Do you have any recollection of Mr. Guerrero's participation?
- Muna: Yes, I remember that. But what I remember the most is that he agreed to it at the end of our discussion.

- Siemer: The Saipan Municipal Council also considered the Covenant and passed a resolution, didn't they?
- Muna: Yes.
- Siemer: Were you there when they did that?
- Muna: Yes. I was working for them.
- Siemer: Was there any disagreement on that Council about the Covenant?
- Muna: No.
- Siemer: So there was pretty wide support in the legislative, among the elected politicians in Saipan?
- Muna: Yes.
- Siemer: How about the elected politicians in Tinian and Rota?
- Muna: They had no objection, really. They gave us their support.
- Siemer: Once the Covenant was signed, what participation did you have in the public education program that started after that?
- Muna: I was involved, but not directly. We set up a committee in the Legislature for them to go out for public education.
- Siemer: Who were the principal people who were involved?
- Muna: Jess Guerrero, he was the chairman for that and was directly involved in the education for the Covenant.
- Siemer: When the public education program began, what did you think about the amount of time that was available to do the public education before the plebiscite?
- Muna: Some people, especially the opposition, said that there was not enough time.
- Siemer: What did you think about that argument?
- Muna: I think that was wrong, because since we started negotiating with the United States, people were being educated. They knew what was going on. So that was substantially an education for them.
- Siemer: Then the opposition from Oscar Rasa and Joe Mafnas started. What do you recall about that?
- Muna: They had their own group. They had their own meetings. Substantially Carolinians.
- Siemer: Shortly after that the Congress of Micronesia gave them \$10,000 to finance some of their activities. What was your reaction to that?
- Muna: Great. Free country.
- Siemer: What do you remember about the exchanges between Pete A. Tenorio and Oscar Rasa about that \$10,000?
- Muna: I don't know. I knew there was a problem between them, but that's what I had heard.
- Siemer: What effect did you think that the Congress of Micronesia contribution had here in Saipan?
- Muna: I didn't mind that; even if they came out with \$100,000, I don't think it would change anything.

- Siemer: What do you recall about Plebiscite Commissioner Erwin Canham? Did you have an opportunity to meet him when he came out here?
- Muna: Yes. He stayed behind as Resident Commissioner, and he was here for a number of years after the Covenant.
- Siemer: What did you think of Canham?
- Muna: He was a great man. He was very understanding. He knew what he was doing.
- Siemer: How did he do when he first came out here as far as getting to know local peoples' concerns?
- Muna: He tried to meet first the Legislature, the members of the Legislature, the Municipal Council. He visited the villages.
- Siemer: Did he come personally and make visits?
- Muna: Yes.
- Siemer: When Erwin Canham came to the Marianas, there wasn't much time left before the plebiscite. What did you think about the organization of the plebiscite vote itself?
- Muna: I had no problem with that. I thought it was very fair. The timing was okay; no problem with that.
- Siemer: What do you recall about the wording of the ballot? Did you have any concerns about that?
- Muna: No, because the people were educated. They knew where to vote and what to vote for.
- Siemer: After the plebiscite results were available and the Covenant was sent to Congress for approval, you began to see bills in the District Legislature setting up the Constitutional Convention. Do you recall that?
- Muna: Yes, I recall that. They pretty much looked forward to our Constitution that we have now.
- Siemer: People were anxious to get the Constitutional Convention under way?
- Muna: Yes. That was to accompany the Covenant as soon as it was approved by the United States Congress.
- Siemer: The first bill to set up the Constitutional Convention was vetoed by Canham because he was concerned about the way that the Legislature had set up the election. What do you recall about that?
- Muna: I don't remember that.
- Siemer: He was concerned about whether the Carolinians could win in an election and whether they would be represented in the Constitutional Convention.
- Muna: There was that concern; that I remember.
- Siemer: And there was some concern in the Legislature about districting or running island-wide. Do you remember that?
- Muna: Yes.
- Siemer: What was the reaction in the District Legislature when Canham vetoed the Constitutional Convention bill?

- Muna: They listened and took his consideration about the problems he saw and the reason for vetoing it. Like I have said, Canham was a person who would listen and think. I know he listened to the Carolinians' concern. So that's the reason why this concern was with him. That's the reason why we set up later on after the veto some measures to make sure that the Carolinian people can also be participating in the Convention.
- Siemer: What did you yourself think as a politician about the Carolinians' ability to win an election?
- Muna: There's no problem about that. They were winning the elections.
- Siemer: That's exactly the way it turned out, right.
- Muna: Right. No, no problem with that. We had several Carolinians in the Commonwealth Legislature.
- Siemer: Did you follow the Constitutional Convention once it got under way?
- Muna: No, I'm sorry, but I didn't.
- Siemer: What about the public education after the Constitutional Convention was over? What was your impression about that?
- Muna: They had done their job. I think it was Larry Cabrera who was the chairman for the public education. Most of that time I was in Washington, and I still remember Ambassador Williams when we told him that people had passed the Constitution. He said, "Oh, that's great."
- Siemer: How long did you stay in the District Legislature?
- Muna: From 1964 to 1977.
- Siemer: Then what did you do after that?
- Muna: After that I worked for the office of Mayor Luis Benavente.
- Siemer: How long were you there?
- Muna: For only a year and a half.
- Siemer: That was 1978?
- Muna: Only one year. 1976-1977. Because after that, all those who were working for the municipal government were transferred to the Commonwealth government.
- Siemer: Then where did you work in the Commonwealth government?
- Muna: I was assigned to the Land Management Office, but I just worked there for three weeks, and I was reassigned to the Mayor's Office of Saipan under Frank Diaz, because he personally asked that I work for him, that I be transferred to him.
- Siemer: Then how long did you work there?
- Muna: I worked there only for three months. I was sorry I had to quit working for him, but I switched parties from the Popular Party to the Territorial Party in 1976. The Ladies Association, when they saw me working for Mayor Diaz, who was the Popular Party mayor, they got mad at him.
- Willens: The ladies were disappointed with you because you switched parties?
- Muna: Yes, in 1976.

- Willens: During the negotiations, at one point Congressman Burton came out and met with the Commission and offered advice on various subjects. Do you recall any meetings with Congressman Burton during the negotiations?
- Muna: Congressman Burton would meet with Eddie and Ben. We didn't meet with him. Congressman Burton didn't want to be seen as very favorable to us. At one time, he invited us for a get-together reception in Washington, and he just stayed there for only about 30 minutes, and he left us, because he didn't want to be seen or to associate with us there. Mostly Eddie and Ben Santos would be meeting with him.
- Willens: Did you go back to Washington to help with the lobbying efforts before the U.S. Congress?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: Did you appear before the House Committee, or did you appear on the Senate side, or both?
- Muna: We appeared before the Subcommittee on Insular and Interior Affairs.
- Willens: In the House of Representatives?
- Muna: In the House of Representatives. We didn't really lobby. Everything went really fast in the House. But with the Senate, that's the problem; it takes one year before the Senate can take up the joint resolution for them to approve the Covenant.
- Siemer: Who went with you on that first trip when you went to the House of Representatives?
- Muna: Mostly the Commission members.
- Siemer: Was there a committee of the Commission, or were all the Commission members invited to go?
- Muna: I think half of the Commission members were there.
- Willens: How about on the Senate side? Were you surprised at opposition that developed to the Covenant?
- Muna: No. I could understand that even among the House and the Senate, sometimes they disagree. So I was not surprised.
- Willens: Did you personally meet with any of the Senators or their staff to try to explain the Covenant and why you hoped they would support it?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: Who do you recall meeting with?
- Muna: Eddie usually sent me to Senator Hart, Senator Pell.
- Siemer: Senator Hart was not very supportive.
- Willens: Senator Pell was pretty difficult, too.
- Muna: Yes. I didn't understand why Eddie sent me to their offices. If there was a document in the House circulating against the Covenant, we would try to overcome that, and then we'd write our own. So that's where we usually went around and met with the staff and sometimes with the Senators. I remember one time I was going to Senator Hart's office, and he was coming out from the back door. I said, "Senator, I think this is for you."
- Willens: So you delivered your paper to him?

- Muna: Yes.
- Siemer: Did you ever have a chance to meet with Senator Hart personally?
- Muna: That was the only time that I met him personally really when he was coming out. I knew him, but that was the only time I talked to him personally and gave it to him and I said, "Senator, I think this is for you."
- Siemer: How about his staff? Did you have a chance to meet with them?
- Muna: Some of the staff there who were against the Covenant didn't even want to speak to us. And maybe even if we spoke to them, they said, "I'm sorry, but the Senator has already made up his mind he's not supporting you." This and that.
- Willens: Did they ever try to explain why he had reached that position?
- Muna: They had their own agenda against it.
- Willens: Was it because of the military aspects of it and they did not want to be supporting a relationship that seemed to be based in part on military needs?
- Muna: Some of them, yes. That was a problem. But some of the opposing Senators would use for instance the cost of having a new commonwealth for the United States and they said this would be more cost to the taxpayers, and that's what they were using against us.
- Willens: They would use the cost—the additional economic burden of bringing the Northern Marianas within the United States?
- Muna: Yes, that's right.
- Willens: Also from time to time you heard opponents say, "Well, why should we let these people become part of the United States? Are we going to let anyone become part of the United States who wants to be?" There was often an argument of that kind.
- Muna: Yes, that's right. They said that if we agreed for the Northern Marianas to become of the United States, then any other small islands can petition us that they want to become part of the United States.
- Willens: Do you remember any opposition in the Senate based on the fact that the future status relationships for the other districts had not yet been negotiated and that this whole thing should be deferred, put off?
- Muna: Yes, that was part of their argument against the Commonwealth and the Covenant.
- Willens: Were you at the Senate when the vote on the Covenant actually took place?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: Were you up in the gallery.
- Muna: Yes. Gallery for . . .
- Willens: Visitors?
- Muna: Not visitors. They put us in the place where like Cabinet members or . . .
- Willens: Oh, I see.
- Siemer: It's called the Government Section.
- Muna: That's right. Government Section.
- Willens: And Joe Cruz was with you?

- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: Was it on that occasion when after the vote he started signing “God Bless America”? Or was that in the House of Representatives?
- Muna: No, I think was during the Interior and Insular Affairs of the Senate Subcommittee that Joe did that. I was not there.
- Willens: But you don’t remember this happening in the Senate Chambers itself after the vote?
- Muna: No. He was there, and I was there, and I was counting the vote. As soon as I got 50 votes I said okay.
- Siemer: What did the delegation from the Marianas do right after the vote?
- Muna: We celebrated. I didn’t sleep that night, you know. I was so happy, and everybody was happy. I really didn’t sleep that night. We went out and got a case of beer and celebrated.
- Willens: Where did you all stay then when you came to town?
- Muna: The St. Anthony.
- Willens: You were present at the signing of the ceremony with President Ford, were you not?
- Muna: Yes.
- Willens: What do you remember about the actual signing ceremony and the group of people that surrounded President Ford when he signed?
- Muna: Well, you were there.
- Willens: Yes, I was there in the back. My recollection is that some of the very skilled politicians found a way to get to the front so they would be in the picture.
- Muna: I was lucky; I was one of ones in the front.
- Willens: Because you’re one of the skilled politicians.
- Muna: I still have that picture with President Ford.
- Willens: Do you remember that being an impressive ceremony?
- Muna: Yes. The only problem was you could not take pictures in there, even if you had your camera.
- Willens: Pictures were not permitted, were they?
- Muna: No, they said that it’s not permitted, but I remember Bill Nabors when he took his picture in there. He was taking a picture of us, but it’s black.
- Willens: Nothing happened? It was blank?
- Muna: Yes. I don’t know, something’s there, but unless you’re authorized....
- Willens: Are there any thoughts that you have after 20 years about the Covenant negotiations and about the way in which the relationship has worked out that you’d like to share with us?
- Muna: Well, I know that we have done what we had to do. The document itself is not perfect, but it’s the best that we can have. And I’m still proud that we are part of the United States now, and I’m proud to be an American. After 20 years, I know there is some problem within ourselves here, but that does not mean that the Covenant is a problem. The problem here is that we have so many lawyers now on the island, and they try to interpret the Covenant the way they see it. I don’t know if this is for personal gain or not, but then our leadership

also is listening and it's creating a problem between the federal government and our government here. Hopefully everything will work out the way it should.

Willens: Do you think that the people here are generally satisfied with the economic development, with education, health services and other aspects of the community?

Muna: When you say satisfied, that's a big question. But I believe that our development has been great and it's much better than it was before. It's up to us now to make this development work for the people so that everybody will be accommodated, everybody will have some satisfaction.

Willens: Thank you very much.