

INTERVIEW OF PEDRO M. OGO

by Deanne C. Siemer and Howard P. Willens

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- Siemer: Pedro M. Ogo is a distinguished teacher from Rota who served for many years as the principal of the public school on Rota, and who has worked in the central government's Commerce Department and Division of Public Lands, also on Rota. Mr. Ogo has kindly agreed to an interview with respect to our project. I want to thank you very much, Mr. Ogo, for agreeing to help us. We'd like to start with your family background. Could you tell us about your father and your mother, their names and where they were born.
- Ogo: My mother's name was Cecilia Maratita Ogo, and my dad's name was Jesus Borja Ogo. They are both dead.
- Siemer: Were they both born here in Rota?
- Ogo: I'm not sure whether they were born here or not, but I take it that they were born here. The families were originally from Guam.
- Siemer: What year were you born?
- Ogo: I was born in 1939.
- Siemer: Here in Rota?
- Ogo: Yes.
- Siemer: How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- Ogo: I have four brothers and three sisters.
- Siemer: Can you identify your brothers and sisters for us.
- Ogo: Yes. The oldest one died. Another one died also—same name, Felix. The ones that are still living, the oldest one is married to the Hocog family. The second one is Candida Ogo Flaherty, she's staying in the States. Then the one who died, Felixberto. Then myself, Pedro Maratita Ogo. Then Fermina Ogo Blas who is married and residing here. After her came Oscar Maratita Ogo. The youngest one is Denishio Maratita Ogo. They live here, except Oscar. Oscar is working on Saipan for the hospital.
- Siemer: What is your wife's name?
- Ogo: Maiden name, Janet Borja Hocog.
- Siemer: And how many children do you have?
- Ogo: We have six children, three boys, three girls. The oldest one is Ron Ivan Ogo. He's working here for the Fire Department. Then the second one is Ray Marvin Ogo. He's still attending college in the States. Then would be Roxanne Hocog Ogo, followed by Rhonda Hocog Ogo, and then Rochelle Hocog Ogo. They're all staying in the States. The youngest one is Roston Lee Ogo, about nine now.
- Siemer: Where were you educated?
- Ogo: I attended school here [on Rota] for elementary from first to sixth grade. Then I attended school on Saipan where I finished the intermediate. Then I went to Guam to finish high school.

- Siemer: Was that Hopwood on Saipan?
- Ogo: Yes. Intermediate school.
- Siemer: Which school did you go to in Guam?
- Ogo: In Guam, I went to GW [George Washington High School] before it was destroyed by a typhoon. I attended the College of Guam for two years.
- Siemer: What did you study there?
- Ogo: I studied education. I wanted to study for architect or engineer, but it was not available at that time, so I just took the general education course. That was why I worked for Education for 20 some years.
- Siemer: When did you finish at the University of Guam?
- Ogo: 1963.
- Siemer: Then what did you do?
- Ogo: I went back and continued working for Education [Department].
- Siemer: Had you worked for them before you went to the University of Guam?
- Ogo: Yes, I worked for Education for two years.
- Siemer: Were you teaching?
- Ogo: Yes, I was teaching in elementary school, specifically for sixth graders.
- Siemer: When you came back from the University of Guam, were you in a teaching position again?
- Ogo: Yes. Then I was promoted to be the principal of this school.
- Siemer: What year was that?
- Ogo: That was in 1968. I was principal all the way until 1981.
- Siemer: Which school were you principal of?
- Ogo: The Rota Elementary and High School. At that time they consolidated it, and it existed on one campus. Then we separated the high school campus to the Rota High School now.
- Siemer: How many students were there in the school when you first became principal?
- Ogo: About 250.
- Siemer: How many by 1981?
- Ogo: About 300.
- Siemer: What did you do after you were principal of the high school?
- Ogo: I worked for the Commerce Department, that was under Governor Camacho's time. We were having a political problem, so I retired for something like one year and came back to work again after my brother-in-law had his victory in the House of Representatives.
- Siemer: Who is that?
- Ogo: Victor Borja Hocog.
- Siemer: When you came back to work, where were you working?

- Ogo: I worked under him for four years.
- Siemer: In his office here on Rota?
- Ogo: Yes.
- Siemer: What years were those?
- Ogo: I believe 1986-90.
- Siemer: What did you do in 1990?
- Ogo: I was a retiree. Then a few years ago I came back to work for the government again.
- Siemer: What does your job entail now?
- Ogo: Well, my job here is to coordinate public land matters. I'm working here now under the Division of Public Land for Rota. I'm the head here, and my immediate supervisor is Ms. Bertha Camacho.
- Siemer: How much public land is there on Rota now?
- Ogo: Well, not much. We have probably one-third left, so we're trying to program it mainly for homesteads. We have very little available now for agricultural homesteads. We'd like to preserve what's left for residential homesteads. Just recently the mayor on Rota wrote a letter to reserve about 200 hectares remaining, and probably that will be the last homesteads.
- Siemer: Back when you were at the University of Guam, were you active in politics?
- Ogo: Not really. I was pursuing my education mainly.
- Siemer: How about your father and mother? Had they been active in politics?
- Ogo: No.
- Siemer: Were they members of a political party?
- Ogo: Not in a very drastic way. They were very mild. But at that time, you know, you were either on one side or the other side.
- Willens: What were the two sides?
- Ogo: Territorial and Popular, and since Territorial here at one time dominated the politics, there was not much opposition on the Popular side. Very few people there maybe 20 on the whole island.
- Willens: In the 1960s, what was the population of Rota approximately?
- Ogo: Just about 1,000.
- Willens: And how many people are here on Rota today approximately?
- Ogo: Oh, there are about 3,500. That's about what it is, including outsiders staying here.
- Willens: When you came back to Rota in 1963, were you aware that the Territorial Party was striving towards some kind of a direct relationship with the United States in the future?
- Ogo: Yes, I had the notion that it was trying to strive to come into the family of the United States, and somehow we have come up with a commonwealth government, and it seems that the whole people of the Northern Mariana Islands agreed to that also.
- Willens: How did you feel in the 1960s about the TTPI government? Did you think it was doing a good job in providing services to the people?

- Ogo: Well, probably on Saipan, but for Rota we were pretty much isolated in a way, since all the money was budgeted under one budget for the Northern Marianas, and Saipan had control over it. Whatever it could give us, they gave to us. So we were really striving hard during that time.
- Willens: Was it your perception that the political leaders on Saipan were not treating Rota fairly in terms of making money available for education and other programs?
- Ogo: Well, I don't want to blame the people on Saipan, but it's just a politics thing. Whoever are in the political arena at that time, they have control of the money. Since it's a one house deal, and Rota only has one representative out of maybe 12, and Tinian and one, even if we would combine with them, we just can't do anything. At that time, politics were pretty strong. If you're not in the right party, then they won't hear you.
- Willens: During the 1960s, the Marianas District Legislature was dominated by the Popular Party.
- Ogo: Right.
- Willens: So was it a disadvantage to the people on Rota that you sent a Territorial Party representative there?
- Ogo: Definitely. They won't hear your view. Generally the members would just sit there while you are trying to justify what you are trying to ask for.
- Willens: What's your sense of the relationship between the people here and the people on Guam?
- Ogo: As far as politics are concerned, at one time we had aired our concern that if we can't get the budget that we wanted, we'd like to stay with Guam because, as far as we were concerned, we felt we were part of Guam. Every time we wanted something, we'd go to Guam rather than going to Saipan. During the Trust Territory time, Guam was way ahead as far as economy was concerned, so as far as shopping is concerned. Whatever we want, we go to Guam instead of Saipan.
- Willens: Did you find any hostility on Guam because some of the Chamorros from the Northern Marianas had worked for the Japanese during the war?
- Ogo: Well, it's a minor thing. Only during the Japanese time there were a few people who had a feeling that staying on Rota was the idea, but as far as having say bad feelings for Rota people, they don't have that.
- Willens: What experience did your mother and father have under the Japanese Administration? Did they remember it favorably, or did they regard it as a hostile administration?
- Ogo: It was a hostile administration.
- Willens: What did they tell you as you were growing up about life under the Japanese?
- Ogo: Well, they expressed to us that they worked real hard for free. But not only that, the Japanese took control of our farm, so we were just staying somewhere in the wilderness.
- Willens: On Saipan, the Japanese invested a lot in sugarcane and tapioca and other crops. Did the Japanese develop Rota in the same intense way?
- Ogo: Well, yes. They used Rota to produce as much supplies as they could. That's why they even got other laborers Koreans, Okinawans, and they were helping the Japanese there. Not to mention the local people here. The Japanese just made them work for free.
- Siemer: How did your family survive after the Japanese took their farm?

- Ogo: We just lived in the wilderness. My dad was working for the Japanese, and every now and then my dad brought a little supplies from what he could get from the place where he worked.
- Willens: What was he doing for the Japanese?
- Ogo: Mainly as an interpreter and as a person that kills cows or whatever, who prepared that for the Japanese.
- Willens: Was he paid for that work?
- Ogo: No.
- Willens: What was the reaction that you can remember from your family when the Americans came in 1944?
- Ogo: They were relieved. Having the understanding that the American people are nice people that hopefully whatever they were doing at that time, that it would be changed. And definitely after the war, things changed. We went back to our farm and started living on the farm.
- Willens: Did you have any difficulty in claiming title to the farm that your family owned?
- Ogo: No, we didn't have any problem in going back to our original place where we were staying.
- Willens: In 1965, the Secretary of the Interior created the Congress of Micronesia, and Benjamin Manglona was one of the first people to run successfully for the Congress of Micronesia. Do you recall having any impression at the time as to whether bringing all the districts together in a Congress of Micronesia was a good idea?
- Ogo: Well, it was a pretty good idea, because at least we would have a body that could discuss whatever they wanted with the United States. But based on ourselves, as far as Rota was concerned, we were still minor as far as population was concerned. We're very few compared to other districts, so based on the population where they get their representatives, we are again the minority part.
- Willens: That's true for the whole Northern Marianas district as compared with Chuuk, for example.
- Ogo: Yes. Even with that kind of formulation, we're still very small.
- Willens: Did you personally have the opportunity to travel to any of the other districts during the 1960s?
- Ogo: I had a chance to travel, seeing Truk, Ponape. That's about the only districts I've seen.
- Willens: Did you have the opportunity to meet with educators and other people working in those districts?
- Ogo: Yes. In Truk I discussed matters with Truk educators, because when I was working for Education, that was the time when we went to Truk.
- Willens: Based on your experiences in the other districts that you visited, did you believe that the various districts could remain united as a single entity after the end of the Trusteeship Agreement?
- Ogo: Based on my personal opinion, there would be great difficulties because of the status of the different districts. It would be financially very difficult to be able to get all of these areas improved, and personally I felt that it would be a good idea to identify what kind

of political status we want here so that we can pursue it. And as you probably know, we pursued to be with the United States, and right now we're a commonwealth.

Willens: So your concern in part at the time was that the districts were separated by so much water that there were problems with communication and transportation?

Ogo: Yes. It's very difficult.

Willens: Were the customs and the level of development different among these districts?

Ogo: As far as I'm concerned, whenever I travel to other places, looking at their customs, we can easily get into it, because there's not much difference as far as our customs are concerned. But that played some minor role as far as getting people together. Everybody tends to stick with their own kind of customs, and since some of the districts are very tight with their customs, they don't want to change to anything else. It would be a great difficulty sometimes to try to communicate with these other people.

Willens: In the late 1960s, the Congress of Micronesia began negotiations with the United States, and they ended up recommending a relationship known as free association. The Marianas members of this negotiating group had a different view. Do you have any recollection of the debate between those who advocated free association and those who thought commonwealth was better for the Northern Marianas?

Ogo: Each district had been given a chance to study what they wanted and to determine what political status they wanted. So the Marianas tied up with commonwealth. They bought that. And other districts were studying something else. And Palau came up with independence.

Siemer: Was there much sentiment here in Rota back in those days for independence?

Ogo: As far as I'm concerned, being an independent at that time would probably be all right with me. We kind of got used to living on our own. So far as economic improvement is concerned, there was not much improvement at that time, so it really didn't matter what kind of a status we were anyway, independent or what. We pretty much survived on our own because living on a farm, tending it ourselves, as long as we get something to eat it's okay. At that time, things were prosperous. There were fish, animals, like deer, for example. There were quite a number at that time.

Willens: Economic development was not an important consideration to people on Rota?

Ogo: Yes.

Siemer: Back in those days, there was a plebiscite about reunification with Guam. What was the reaction to that here on Rota?

Ogo: Well, we pretty much liked the idea of reunification with Guam, but at that time Guam had different notion and they didn't want to. So it died. The Rota people supported reunification.

Willens: The Territorial Party was the dominant party here at the time, but the Territorial Party on Saipan did not want reunification with Guam. It was the Popular Party that wanted reunification with Guam.

Ogo: We didn't get a good part of whatever financial aspects Saipan was enjoying at that time. They were controlling the budget, and so we felt that it would be a much better situation being with Guam than with Saipan, at that time.

Siemer: Were people here surprised when the people in Guam voted against reunification?

- Ogo: Yes. We were kind of surprised.
- Siemer: How did people feel about that?
- Ogo: Well, Guam for example voting against it, it was because of the history during the Japanese time. I believe that was what created the notion that Guam went against reunification.
- Willens: Did you have relatives on Guam at the time?
- Ogo: Yes.
- Willens: Did you ever discuss this issue with them?
- Ogo: No, because traveling to Guam was pretty difficult.
- Willens: That was because of the cost?
- Ogo: Yes, the cost of traveling.
- Willens: Secretary of the Interior Hickel came out to the Northern Mariana Islands in 1969 and made a speech. Do you have any recollection of Secretary Hickel's visit?
- Ogo: No. I was not aware of it.
- Willens: The Marianas Political Status Commission was formed in 1972, and Rota designated Benjamin Manglona and Joannes Taimanao to the Commission. Do you have any recollection of how they were selected?
- Ogo: I'm not sure. Joannes I don't think ever got onto the Commission. Maybe as a staff, but not as a political representative.
- Willens: Was he an educator at the time, do you remember?
- Ogo: Yes, he was in Education at one time, and he worked for the Administration also. Then he worked for Education or vice versa, worked for Education and then for the Administration, that's right.
- Willens: During the negotiations between the Commission and the United States, were you and your other citizens here kept informed as to what the Commission was doing?
- Ogo: We were pretty much informed on that. That's why we supported what the Commission was doing.
- Willens: How were you informed?
- Ogo: I personally felt that I was pretty much informed because I read the papers. I kept myself up-to-date.
- Siemer: The newspapers?
- Ogo: No, they didn't have the *Variety* at that time, just a paper from say for example Ben's office.
- Siemer: Oh, Benjamin Manglona issued papers.
- Ogo: And whatever news he had there, he wrote something and gave it to us to read.
- Willens: The Commission and the United States delegation covered a lot of subjects in these negotiations. Which of those issues were most important to you?
- Ogo: We tried to govern ourselves independently. That's a major issue as far as I'm concerned. And having the United States to support us as far as financial status is concerned, that helped. But learning that we can decide on our future and what kind of status we want to be, that seems to be pretty much fair, as far as I'm concerned.

- Willens: Was United States citizenship an objective that you attached a value to?
- Ogo: That played an important role. We wanted to become part of the U.S. family, yes.
- Willens: Why was U.S. citizenship considered important?
- Ogo: Because it gives us the privilege that anybody who wants to go to the United States can go there and strive for whatever life he wants to lead. And that seems to be pretty open as far as we're concerned. We're pretty liberal as far as what we want, and what we want really is to be with the United States. By becoming U.S. citizens, that gives us a great privilege.
- Siemer: Do many people from here send their children to school in the States?
- Ogo: At that time and now, they sent the kids to the States.
- Siemer: Do many of them stay in the States?
- Ogo: Yes, many of them as soon as their school was ended, they just stayed there. They never came back.
- Willens: What's your view about that? Is that a good development or a bad development?
- Ogo: Well, it seems like somehow they have found that they are more liberated there and they found more economic aspects as far as life is concerned. That's why they stayed there. They found work. The money that they're getting probably can support themselves better.
- Willens: Are there jobs for college-educated men and women here in Rota?
- Ogo: Yes. At that time we really wanted people that are educated to come back and help develop the place, but very few people returned. Most of them just stayed where they pursued their education, probably because they had been offered a good salary, things like that. That's why they just stayed there.
- Willens: At the very last stages of the negotiations, the Rota Municipal Council issued a resolution to the effect that the Covenant should be amended to provide for a bicameral legislature with an upper house in which the three islands would be equally represented. The resolution said that unless this change was made, that people on Rota would not support the Covenant. What is your recollection of how that came about?
- Ogo: Well, by reading the history of the United States, we learned that bicameral tends to be very good for minorities. As far as we're concerned, we're a minority here in Rota. So we will be a minority as far as the House of Representatives is concerned. But in the Senate, we will play an important role. We can vote with Tinian, and then we will have a voice. That seems to work well. That's why we supported real hard during the Covenant time to have the bicameral legislature.
- Willens: Do you recall any discussion that the Rota Municipal Council had within the Council or with the public when they drafted this resolution?
- Ogo: I don't quite recall what happened there. During the Convention time we were discussing this local government without a municipal council. The council is not really important. As long as we have a bicameral legislature, we can do away with the council. That's why we abolished the council, and we have the local representatives [in the legislature] act as a council. They can enact local laws by themselves, and that's why we adopted that provision.
- Willens: After the Covenant was signed by the members of the Commission and the U.S. delegation, there then was a public education process before the plebiscite at which the

people could vote for or against the Covenant. Was there any opposition to the Covenant on the island of Rota that you can remember?

Ogo: No.

Siemer: Did you have any family members in the Marianas District Legislature back then?

Ogo: Yes. My brother was in District Legislature before me.

Siemer: When did he serve?

Ogo: I served from I believe 1969-71, and my brother came in earlier, so he probably served 1967-69.

Willens: You had one term in the District Legislature?

Ogo: Yes, just one term.

Willens: What prompted you to run?

Ogo: My brother had a stroke in Guam, that's why he ceased to be the representative here, but he had a better chance than I did. As a matter of fact, at one time when he was running for office on the council, we put a wager just between us (you know, a case of beer) for whoever wins. Well, I had a very strong notion that I would win, but eventually I didn't. Yes, he beat the hell out of me. Then I learned at that time that having an education isn't that important to people here. It's what you are. Can you deal with the people? That seems to be more important than being educated.

Willens: Which brother was it?

Ogo: Felixberto Ogo. He died during his term.

Siemer: Did you then take his seat in the District Legislature?

Ogo: Later on, yes. I was not appointed at that time. But right after he died, I ran for the Legislature, and I won.

Siemer: Why did you decide not to run again?

Ogo: Well, because of the way things were going in the Legislature. The Saipan delegates, they just do what they want. So I said well, I don't like this kind of thing. As far as what we [on Rota] want to pursue, we're not going anywhere. So, I decided I might as well stop and go back into education where I felt I could be of more assistance to the people than being a legislator.

Siemer: Why did you decide to run for the Constitutional Convention?

Ogo: Because I wanted to help formulate as far as the government is concerned. I wanted to make sure that what was there as far as Rota is concerned would work in the government.

Siemer: How were the candidates selected here in Rota?

Ogo: Well, it is a process of putting supporters together. You have a family, he's got a family, I'm putting these families together, you know. How many supporters do you have? If we have say five [candidates] running, is it [the number of supporters] enough to get the victory? Personally, myself, I felt that being together with these other individuals, we would be able to get the victory that we wanted.

Siemer: Who did you run with?

Ogo: I ran with the former Lt. Governor and his brother, David Atalig, Pete Atalig, Leon Taisican, Greg Calvo, myself. There were about eight of us, I guess.

- Siemer: Pete Dela Cruz?
- Ogo: Yes, also Pete Dela Cruz. That's correct.
- Siemer: Who were the people who ran against you?
- Ogo: I really can't recall. It was really not that important, as far as I'm concerned. I forgot who ran against us. It was not a political thing. It was a non-partisan thing. So those that lost, I don't remember really.
- Siemer: Was there much campaigning for the Constitutional Convention election?
- Ogo: It was pretty stiff.
- Siemer: Here in Rota?
- Ogo: Yes.
- Siemer: When you were elected, did the Rota delegates get together before the Convention to decide how they wanted to approach this?
- Ogo: Not really. Just every now and then we'd chat with our constituents, with our colleagues, trying to feel what kind of thing to pursue in this Constitutional Convention.
- Siemer: How long before the Convention did you go to Saipan?
- Ogo: I don't quite recollect whether we went up there before that time or not.
- Siemer: Where did the Rota delegation stay back in those days?
- Ogo: We stayed at the hotel [where the Convention was held]. The mayor and myself stayed at the Royal Taga Hotel, the former mayor. We kind of talked together.
- Siemer: How did the Rota delegation decide how to divide itself up among the three Constitutional Convention committees—the Governmental Institutions Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Personal Rights Committee?
- Ogo: Well, at that time each island [delegation] had been given an office. So we went inside our office, and we kind of decided this. We felt that having a local representative [for public services] seemed to be an important part, and we discussed other things.
- Siemer: You were on the Finance Committee, right, Ben Fitial's committee?
- Ogo: I was on the Local Government Committee.
- Siemer: Tell us how the Rota delegates viewed the municipal councils and whether they could be done away with in the Constitution.
- Ogo: Well, there were something like eight municipal councils before that time. We felt that it was kind of costly as far as government is concerned if we are to continue that. And that was why we decided well, why don't we do away with it. Whoever are the [legislative] representatives, say for example from Rota going to Saipan, would be the council. Maybe give them 30 days time to come back, sit down and enact [laws on] local matters.
- Siemer: Back then, what did you think was particularly important with respect to local government?
- Ogo: The thing was that was most important was trying to support what the people here really wanted. That was to maintain the culture as much as possible and the local medicines, the fish in the water—how can we protect that. That was a major thing. At one time people were poisoning the water [to catch fish] so much that we wanted to make sure that

- we could have an agency here to protect the water for future generations. [A particular substance, dires, was pounded and prepared to make fish easier to catch.]
- Siemer: Were any of the members of the Local Government Committee from Tinian or Saipan friends of yours?
- Ogo: No. The Tinian group had their own office. They just sort of had their meetings themselves, and we had meetings ourselves. But probably the former Lt. Governor may be able to communicate with this Tinian group secretly.
- Siemer: The former Lt. Governor, Benjamin Manglona, a few days into the Convention stood up and made speech in which he said that Rota and Tinian wanted a system of three Lt. Governors. Do you remember that?
- Ogo: Yes.
- Siemer: What do you recall about the reaction of the delegates from Saipan to that proposal?
- Ogo: Oh, they were really opposed to that, because of the economic aspect. The financial aspect is that is too much to have three Lt. Governors.
- Siemer: What did you think about the proposal back then?
- Ogo: Well, it was good really having three Lt. Governors where the Lt. Governors would take care of the specific islands like Rota, Tinian and Saipan, while the Governor would take care of the whole Commonwealth. Since the Governor and [a single] Lt. Governor might be able to be getting together closely and might be opposed to us, we felt that having three Lt. Governors, one for each island, would be great.
- Siemer: Looking back on that proposal now, with everything that's happened since then, how do you think that would have worked out?
- Ogo: It would have worked out good, really. I feel that it would have worked out. You could do away with the mayor and just have the Lt. Governor.
- Willens: Was it your thought that the Lt. Governor would really be managing all the affairs on the separate islands?
- Ogo: Yes.
- Willens: Managing everything from public works to health to education. Was that your understanding?
- Ogo: Yes. It could act as the same system as mayor, in a way. Definitely. I for one would have preferably supported a Lt. Governor than a mayor for each island.
- Siemer: One of the interesting proposals that the delegation from Rota made back in those days was to allow collective bargaining by government employees. Do you remember that?
- Ogo: No, I don't remember that.
- Siemer: It was sort of a surprising proposal in many ways, because if government employees can bargain collectively, they can shut down the government. And I wondered what you recalled about who thought that one up? When we interviewed Justice Atalig, he thought that maybe you did.
- Ogo: No. I would not be surprised if it came from the Lt. Governor. But it's not a bad idea, really. It's pretty good. Just how it's going to work, that's the thing that we want to listen to first.

Siemer: One of the other interesting proposals that came from the Rota delegation was a proposal for capital punishment. Do you remember where that came from?

Ogo: Well, personally from myself, that's reading the news as far as capital punishment in the States really. They got the idea from the United States as far as capital punishment is concerned. As far as my view is concerned, if it's a capital punishment, by all means do away with him and let him rest rather than keep him going for his entire life in prison. It's very costly. I was thinking about the cost. If, for example, the court finds the person incompetent, by all means put him in jail. I for one, I don't want to be in prison for the rest of my life. If that was the situation, you might as well terminate my life.

Siemer: What was the reaction of other delegates to the capital punishment proposal?

Ogo: They're pretty much separated, especially those young people, like Pete, David and the two other younger delegates. They have different notions. But like I said, if the court finds the person useless as far as life is concerned and they've proven that he's done it, then by all means terminate him.

Siemer: One of the other proposals that the Rota delegation made, this time with the Carolinians Ben Fitial and Luis Limes and Pete Igitol, was to require in the Constitution that there be primary elections to select candidates. Do you remember that?

Ogo: I don't remember.

Siemer: That caused a lot of concern on Saipan, because some people were in favor of primaries, and other people did not want to have primaries at all.

Ogo: Well, I understood that there are primary elections in the United States. You first put up yourself in the primary election, and then you get yourself out in general election. I tend to agree with that. Put yourself up in a primary, prove yourself to be an eligible or electable candidate, by all means. I felt that was very fair.

Siemer: How did you feel about the way that the committee structure worked during the Constitutional Convention?

Ogo: Well, I was really not aware as far as what the other committees were doing, but having to break this thing down into committees was pretty much fair. It's good, it's faster, it gives more time to study issues, that seems to be helpful. It worked pretty good.

Siemer: How did you think your committee worked? Was the chairman effective, and did the committee members get along well?

Ogo: Oh, yes. We communicated fairly well. Only when there's a general meeting of the Convention, then we're getting into problems sometimes.

Siemer: Your committee was fairly efficient about getting things to the floor, but not always so good at getting them passed on the floor.

Ogo: Yes. Because we seemed to get very touchy issues, and it's pretty hot. But the important part is what is fair for the entire Constitution. That's the thing that is holding us together.

Siemer: One of the touchy issues that your committee had was constitutional amendment and how a constitution should be amended. Tell us how the Rota delegation looked at that issue and what you personally thought about that.

Ogo: Well, we figured that out. Once we put something in the Constitution, as far as changing the Constitution, if we make things very easy, anybody could have done it, persuade other people to do it. And what we wanted was to make it really hard. Once things are in

the Constitution, make it difficult to change. But we wanted something that if it's very important and the people were really affected by it, that things would change eventually. All the islands would eventually support whatever change was needed.

Siemer: That was a very tough issue for the committee to deal with. You took a proposal to the floor, and it was defeated, and you took another proposal to the floor, and it was defeated again. But it was interesting in that respect because the committee was very cohesive. The committee stuck to its proposal. You brought the same proposal back to the floor three times.

Ogo: That's right.

Siemer: How you think that has worked out? Do you think the standard is too tough?

Ogo: By giving each island the opportunity to vote separately to approve it from its own Senatorial district, and then the other islands have to get a percentage high enough for an overall majority, that seems to work. What we approved is working. So we were very happy.

Siemer: Then another tough issue that you were personally concerned about on the floor was the popular initiative, passing public laws by public vote. Did your colleagues talk you into supporting that?

Ogo: Well, I know it's a tedious process to really implement that. The public already selected someone to represent them. And if the public doesn't like what you're doing, then you will get what you deserve at the end, when the time comes. But not before that, really. I have a great respect for my representative whom I would support, but it doesn't mean that I might not be wrong. I may be wrong, so if I'm wrong then I'm going to wait until the next election to get rid of you. That seems to be fair.

Siemer: What did you think about the way that the main Convention worked, the Committees of the Whole and the votes in the Convention?

Ogo: For Rota, we have certain views that we want to put in the Constitution, and I'm sure Tinian has their own, as well as Saipan. So each group aired their concerns during the Convention. And that was when you have the idea of where are they going, really, what kind of view they have, what seems to be very important to them.

Siemer: Once the Convention arrived at the two-thirds formula, you kept raising the question two-thirds of what? What are we talking about here? And you had sponsored an amendment to make it two-thirds of the registered voters, which is a very tough standard indeed.

Ogo: Yes, but that's very important also, to make sure that it is registered voters. For example in Rota we have a whole bunch of non-resident workers.

Siemer: How many are there here now?

Ogo: Oh, it's a good 1,000 people I guess.

Siemer: Was that a problem back then in Constitutional Convention days?

Ogo: No, not at that time. There weren't really that many alien workers.

Siemer: Back then did you think there were going to be as many as there are now?

Ogo: No. I was viewing that we may be able to be getting in workers that we need, especially technical workers, like construction workers, for instance. I foresaw that there will be a lot of people probably coming from the Philippines, for example, because of the low [wage] rate that we can [pay and still] get [these] individuals.

- Siemer: Were you ever worried back then that a large number of people might come to Rota from the United States, all of whom could vote here because they were U.S. citizens?
- Ogo: No. I was optimistic at that time that people from the United States would not come here, maybe a few probably, but not many due to the economic aspects.
- Siemer: Do you remember the debate in the Convention about the Office of Carolinian Affairs?
- Ogo: Oh, yes.
- Siemer: What was your view about that?
- Ogo: They called it equality for all. Now why should we have a Carolinian Affairs Office? What should it do? It's representing just a minor part, a portion of the group. As far as equality is concerned, we're all equal under the law. That takes care of everybody, really. The system works as far as I'm concerned. When you talk about equality under the law, everybody should be treated the same as far as our Constitution is concerned. For Rota, for example, there are very few Carolinians here, maybe three or four people. For us to get a Carolinian Affairs Office, I don't consider that important. We should just abolish it entirely, forget about that. If they're not being treated fairly, then the government is not functioning, because the government guarantees that everybody is equal under the law.
- Siemer: Your view was shared by most of the Convention delegates, wasn't it?
- Ogo: Yes.
- Siemer: Why did the Carolinian Affairs Office pass then?
- Ogo: It was just politics. The non-Carolinian individuals who were in that Convention, they were thinking about running again in politics in the future, and they needed the support of the Carolinians. That's why they supported that. I felt that the Saipan delegates would support the Carolinian [Office] not because that's what they want really, but it's because of personal interest. I had a notion that whoever introduced that also didn't believe that also, but they just wanted to get what they can. That's why we raised the concern. Okay, now if we have a Carolinian Affairs Office, why can't we choose other ethnic groups? Why not Chamorro also? If there's a Carolinian Affairs, then put in Chamorro Affairs, put in Korean Affairs, put in Filipino Affairs, all kinds of affairs. Whether that is good or not, if they like to put in affairs, the problem is to put [in offices for] all the individuals that are here. I consider that an unconstitutional thing, to have these Carolinians put in and not Chamorro or other ethnic groups.
- Siemer: Do you think it was mainly a Saipan political consideration that caused it to pass?
- Ogo: It was a failure really of other delegates to speak up about how they feel. But it's not a popular issue really. Since the majority of the delegates are from Saipan, it seems to be all right with them as long as they can win for reelection or whatever they want.
- Siemer: What were your views about the land alienation provisions? Were you in favor of the restrictions on selling land to outsiders?
- Ogo: Definitely. We are a very small number of people here in the Commonwealth, and we like to keep our island or our land to the native individuals.
- Siemer: Tell us about the issue of the composition of the Legislature that caused the walkout, and what happened, and why that occurred.
- Ogo: Well, we tried really to play the important role in there, [and if we did] not come to the Convention hopefully that they would support us on that. But it didn't work because

some in our own group, when they were elected, they were from Saipan, they were staying on Saipan.

Siemer: Who was that?

Ogo: Pete Dela Cruz, David Atalig, Greg Calvo. In order for a walkout to be effective, all of the delegates must not show up. And when these individuals showed up, it killed our intention. But we wanted to try to work out the issues as much as we can, especially the local government issues.

Siemer: The issue that was being discussed the day that you actually left was the composition of the lower house. There had been a proposal for 16 from Saipan, 2 from Rota, one from Tinian. Then Ray Villagomez stood up and said no, I think we should have 12 from Saipan, one from Rota and one from Tinian. Why did your delegation react so strongly to that proposal?

Ogo: The 12-1-1? Basically it was more economical. That's what they wanted that. If we cannot get as many representatives as we would like, [we] might as well reduce it down to the lowest minimal level. And 12-1-1 seemed to be an economic proposal.

Siemer: From your experience in the District Legislature, was there any substantive difference to Rota from having two representatives as opposed to having one representative, particularly if Saipan was going to have 16 or 12?

Ogo: It doesn't matter really, if we cannot get the majority number. So even if we give Tinian 2, [and Rota and Tinian have] only 4 against 16, there's no way that we're going to get anywhere.

Siemer: Did you feel comfortable at the time with the upper house?

Ogo: Yes, the upper house, definitely.

Siemer: So if you got together with Tinian in the upper house, you could stop anything that was going through.

Ogo: Yes, exactly. That's why we supported a bicameral [legislature].

Siemer: Why was there such a strong focus then on the lower house, and why did you walk out over the change from two representatives to one representative from Rota?

Ogo: Well, we didn't really walk out just for that issue.

Siemer: What were the other issues?

Ogo: We walked out for something else also that we wanted to get in there. We were playing games in there, trying to get as much as we can for our place, to be put in the Constitution.

Siemer: Was it primarily local government, the other issue?

Ogo: Well, that was a major issue, yes. We were trying to protect the local government as much as we could. So by having a bicameral legislature, we felt that that was very important already. We have made a great part [of what we wanted]. We played an important part in getting that carried.

Siemer: How did the walkout actually come about? Did you meet ahead of time and decide you were going to walk out?

- Ogo: No. The former Lt. Governor sort of in jest said why don't we not show up so that we can get as much as we can. Okay. But it didn't work out because, like I said, the three representatives from Rota staying on Saipan didn't yield to our stand.
- Siemer: Did you talk to them to try to persuade them?
- Ogo: Yes. They were aware of it. We indicated that—why don't we not show up and see what happens. But it didn't work out, because they showed up. We went to get lunch at the Royal Taga and stayed there as a group trying to feel the change.
- Siemer: The idea was to get some more leverage in the Constitution by demonstrating that the group should really go along with your proposals?
- Ogo: Yes. We felt that it was very important, not just for Rota but for the entire islands, you know, for Saipan and Tinian, by protecting a local law, each island then should govern its own affairs.
- Siemer: Did you yourself talk to Greg Calvo or Pete Atalig or David Atalig?
- Ogo: I was sure that they knew the situation. It was just that they felt that they wanted to get the Constitution carried at the end.
- Siemer: How did you feel about that, about getting the Constitution finished?
- Ogo: Yes, it should be finished. Either with me or without me, it should be finished. That's the important part.
- Siemer: Did other delegates try to persuade you to come back?
- Ogo: Oh, they pretty much respected each delegate's stand on what he wanted. They were pretty mellow on this issue. They didn't want to rock the boat. I said well I'm really for the Constitution, but I'm just trying to play more of a role by me not showing up. Hopefully that will [allow Rota to] play an important role, but it didn't eventually. But who knows? Maybe we could have done something else. We could get what we want in [the Constitution] if everybody makes a stand as far as delegates are concerned.
- Siemer: Once it was clear that the Constitution would go on and it would get finished, because some of the Rota delegates stayed in, why did you decide not to come back?
- Ogo: Well, I knew for sure that they would be carried [and the Convention would continue] because there were three [Rota delegates] already in there. So might as well have the Convention carried [on] like that without myself. I have a personal view in that I felt that not getting all my views in [the Constitution] and for me to show up [again, after the walkout], I may not really [be able to] justify [that] as far as our constituents back home. That's why I made a stand to try to block as much as we can. But if we cannot, then by all means let it roll.
- Siemer: Did you go home that day?
- Ogo: No. We just stayed on Saipan until everything was over.
- Siemer: After the Constitution was signed and completed, what happened on Rota with respect to the plebiscite to approve the Constitution? Was there much opposition here?
- Ogo: No. We didn't have much opposition. We explained to our people why we didn't show up—because there were other things that we wanted to go in also, if we can do it. But even if we were not there, there is another representative from Rota who is part of that, so our

blockage didn't work. In general, the Constitution is pretty good.

Siemer: Did anybody who walked out, you or Leon Taisican or Benjamin Manglona, did anybody campaign against the Constitution or tell people to vote no?

Ogo: No, because we were all pretty much satisfied.

Willens: Do you remember any meetings between the Rota delegation and the Tinian delegation in deciding how to deal with the local government issue?

Ogo: No, I don't recall that there was ever a meeting between the Tinian and Rota groups. I don't recall that.

Willens: Did you have any personal dealings with Joe Cruz during that Constitutional Convention?

Ogo: No.

Willens: Did you know any members of the Tinian delegation based on previous experience?

Ogo: No. Sure there are times when we sat down out at lunch together and we'd talk about what can we do as far as our Constitution is concerned. But to make a stand on a certain issue, we didn't do that. We'd just sort of talk in general of what we wanted.

Siemer: Setting the local government and the particular problems with the Legislature aside, were there other issues that you were particularly pleased with the way they came out in the Constitution?

Ogo: Oh, yes. I believe that what we did really is good, for the minimal amount of time that we had and also the differences between the delegates that existed at that time. We were very fortunate to have a Constitution. Very fortunate.

Siemer: After the Constitutional Convention, did you run for public office again?

Ogo: No.

Siemer: Why was that?

Ogo: It's not in my blood to be a politician. I'm pretty much an individual. I like to do what I want to do. That's why being a politician is a different story.

Willens: How do you think the Constitution and the Covenant have worked out over the last 20 years?

Ogo: It has worked out pretty good. I know for one thing, it stands on this alienation of land. That thing came up one time that it's resolved based on the Constitution. So it seems like what we drafted is a good Constitution. It doesn't really rock the boat very much. There have been times when they've tried to [test it in court to] see what happened, and it survived. So the Constitution that we have is pretty good.

Siemer: How about the relationship between the mayor's office and the Governor? If you had to do it over again, would you do that differently?

Ogo: Well, I don't mind the mayor's position. But I strongly support the central government really. To be able to be self-sustaining, we should have a strong government. I support the central government.

Willens: That concludes our interview. We thank you very, very much. It's been very helpful. Is there anything else you'd like to say?

Ogo: Not really. I have talked a lot already. Thank you for giving you this opportunity to talk with you again and meeting you guys again. It's nice to see you again.

Willens: Thank you, sir.