

## INTERVIEW OF JOAQUIN I. PANGELINAN

by Howard P. Willens

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- Willens: Joaquin I. Pangelinan, better known as Mitch Pangelinan, served as a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission and subsequently has been an active political leader in the Commonwealth. Mitch, I appreciate your stopping in this afternoon. I wonder if we might begin by your giving me a little bit of family background as to where you were raised and educated.
- Pangelinan: I was born and raised here on Saipan. Going back to family history, my real mother and father were both Japanese, but they died during the World War II battle here on Saipan. I have one sister older than me, but she was also a victim of the last war, so I was the only survivor of my family. My mother's sister, married to a Saipanese by the name of Francisco Sablan Pangelinan, took me in as a family member, adopted me actually. That's how I took up Pangelinan as a last name.
- Willens: Were you educated then here in Saipan?
- Pangelinan: Yes, elementary school here on Saipan, up to junior high, then I went to Guam.
- Willens: When was that, Mitch?
- Pangelinan: That was back in 1957.
- Willens: Was that for high school?
- Pangelinan: High school, George Washington High School in Guam. At that time, there were no airplanes here, no commercial planes, so we took a long ride on the Navy boat or Navy ship. It took us from 7:00 in the morning until the following morning.
- Willens: Would you stay then in Guam for the whole week, or would you stay there for months at a time?
- Pangelinan: No, we stayed there until the vacation time. School starts, we stayed on until the summer.
- Willens: Why wasn't there a high school here?
- Pangelinan: There was a high school back in 1957, Mt. Carmel, just starting, but I decided that there are family members in Guam. It's an established school in Guam, George Washington. Mt. Carmel just started at the time, so I took advantage of seeing Guam, too, at the same time.
- Willens: Was George Washington a religious school?
- Pangelinan: No, it's a public school.
- Willens: And after you graduated from George Washington High School, did you go on to further education?
- Pangelinan: Yes, I went on further, at that time was College of Guam, then later was changed to University of Guam. I attended the first two years, freshman and sophomore, but then during the summer after sophomore year, there was a major typhoon here on Saipan.
- Willens: That was in the early 1960s?

Pangelinan: 1961, 1962, around that period. Being the oldest son in the family, our house was destroyed, and I'm forced to stick around and help the family rebuild. That was the end of my education. I stayed back. Stayed home.

Willens: From that point, 1963 or thereabouts, up to the present, have you lived then in the Marianas?

Pangelinan: Yes, all that time.

Willens: Was there United States assistance in dealing with the rebuilding process after the typhoon?

Pangelinan: Only materials, but there was no financial assistance or small business administration at that time. Whatever the Navy has in their supplies as far as lumber and nails, they tried to provide the civilian population. The rest, it's up to each family to scrounge around, buy their own materials. But then at that time, practically everything was very cheap. Even though the salaries at that time were low, but the prices were also very low, so we were able to buy a lot of the construction materials.

Willens: Is it your recollection that the typhoon happened while the Navy still had the administrative responsibility for Saipan? The jurisdiction was transferred from the Navy to Interior of May 1962.

Pangelinan: I think it was TT time, it was a transition period, shifting over from Navy to the Trust Territory. But at that time, the Navy still has some personnel here on Saipan, not many. Like I said, at that time, everything was cheap.

Willens: As a student in Guam, Mitch, in the very early 1960s, did you become acquainted with some of the political status issues that later became so important in the Northern Marianas?

Pangelinan: Not during high school or early college. I didn't pay much attention as far as politics, except here at home, there's a feeling of the so-called reintegration issues between the Northern Marianas now and Guam at that time, it's just starting. Senators from Guam will visit Saipan every so often and make contact with our Saipan Congress or Saipan Municipal Council at that time. It was almost a personal type contact between the Guam senators and our Saipan Municipal Council or Congress at the time.

Willens: Did you have personal or family relationships in Guam that you made reference to?

Pangelinan: Yes. My father's brother, I lived with them in Guam. They were residing in Guam, so I stayed with them almost like a sponsor during my school days in Guam.

Willens: Did you become politically active when you came back to Saipan?

Pangelinan: Yes.

Willens: Were you involved in the first Marianas District Legislature in 1963?

Pangelinan: As part of the so-called Young Popular Party. I became at that point very interested in the status situation here in the Marianas, so we organized and joined the so-called Young Popular Party.

Willens: Why did you pick the Popular Party as opposed to the then Progressive Party?

Pangelinan: Well, at that time, we need to change status. We want a different political status here in the Marianas, and at that time, the closest status to the Northern Marianas is Guam, and Guam being a U.S. possession since 1898, and I was there in Guam, I looked at the economic situation, the standard of living in Guam at that time, is far superior to us here

in the Northern Marianas. And the Popular Party at that time was supporting the so-called reintegration, trying to unite Guam and the Northern Marianas into one Marianas, politically, educationally, economically.

Willens: Was there a growing interest here in the Marianas and on Saipan particularly in more economic development in the early 1960s?

Pangelinan: Yes.

Willens: Why was it that economic development had been so slow in progressing?

Pangelinan: It became so slow because we had a changeover in the Trust Territory government. The Trust Territory government's jurisdiction encompasses beyond the Marianas, we're talking about Palau, Truk, Ponape, more than 3 million square miles. So we're just one entity among the six Micronesian political organizations. So the Trust Territory government at that time is looking at a bigger, a giant, you can say, a big area that they cannot handle with a limited financial assistance from the United States at that period.

Willens: Were you aware that the United States in the early 1960s was reexamining its policy regarding Micronesia?

Pangelinan: Yes, with the so-called Solomon Report.

Willens: Did you have any contact with any of the Solomon Commission members when they visited the Marianas in 1963?

Pangelinan: Not me personally, but I was fully aware of what's happening from the Solomon Report. The United Nations visiting team were out here every year, practically every year, to look over the situation.

Willens: What kind of impact did those visits by the U.N. visiting mission have?

Pangelinan: Not much, not much. In this period they come and visit us, we present our grievances and our problems, and that was the end of it. We wouldn't know anything until next year when they come back and visit us, we question what have they done with our grievances that we have presented last year? They gave us a lot of run around, and that's basically very frustrating.

Willens: There were visiting missions from the United Nations that came every three years. There were visiting missions in 1961 and 1964. Both were somewhat critical of U.S. administration here in the Trust Territory. Do you think that criticism had any impact on U.S. policy?

Pangelinan: Part of it, but I believe the basic part of it was we have been under the Trust Territory, and we felt that we had been neglected. At that time, it seemed like the Trust Territory government is looking more toward the other Micronesian islands than us here in the Marianas, so even though we're generating more revenues, local revenues, and it seems so obvious that we are, even though we're generating more revenues than any of the other districts, but we were not seeing those revenues stay around the island. It seemed like they collect it here, and they send it to the other islands. So it seems like the other islands are benefiting from our work, our product here.

Willens: That's an interesting perspective, because I've heard that the other districts were frequently jealous of the Marianas and particularly Saipan because this was the location of the headquarters, there were more expatriates here with larger salaries to spend in the local community, and there had been a lot of U.S. government investment on the island. Was that a criticism you heard from time to time?

- Pangelinan: Yes, we heard that criticism. It's one of the excuses that they always bring up, that headquarters is up here. Unfortunately, the Trust Territory government did not build those infrastructures. They found it. They found those infrastructures here intact, and the United States government didn't want to spend millions of dollars building a brand new infrastructure. And it is very convenient, no cost to the United States for additional cost of building additional infrastructure. But it's true, it's an excuse that they always come up with every time we complain that we are generating so many millions and we're not seeing those millions stay on Saipan or in the Marianas.
- Willens: Was this an issue that you saw developing in the early 1960s?
- Pangelinan: Yes.
- Willens: And it's an issue that stayed with the Trust Territory for many later years, isn't that correct?
- Pangelinan: Continuously. It was a continuous thing until late in the 1960s when our party, again, our party at the time was the Popular Party, we did something very drastic beyond anyone's dream.
- Willens: What was that?
- Pangelinan: We had members of the Congress of Micronesia from here, Herman Q. Guerrero, Eddie Pangelinan, and the Popular Party finally decided enough is enough, we want to get out of the current status, which is similar to Trust Territory government, and go on our own, be it commonwealth, free associated state, whichever is the fastest, but get out of the rest of Micronesia because they're dragging us back as far as economic development, education, social structures here in the Marianas.
- Willens: I want to come back to that. Mitch, did you after helping the family reconstruct its home and get resettled, did you become employed here in Saipan?
- Pangelinan: Yes.
- Willens: What was your employment history?
- Pangelinan: I started as an elementary school teacher. I taught fifth and sixth grade, but I spent only one year, because I majored in business administration accounting, and at that time my major goal was to become an accountant. So I stayed for one year with the Department of Education. After one year I decided to move to my real profession which was in accounting. So I applied for an accounting job up at Trust Territory. I got that job.
- Willens: So you worked with the Trust Territory during what period of time?
- Pangelinan: About 1963, 1964. I spent several more years with the Trust Territory in the Department of Finance.
- Willens: There came a time when you became an official of the Peace Corps, isn't that correct?
- Pangelinan: That was later.
- Willens: Was that a full-time job, though?
- Pangelinan: Yes.
- Willens: That was in the early 1970s at the time that you became a member of the Commission?
- Pangelinan: Right. It was 1969 that I moved to the Peace Corps. Prior to that, I was with the Department of Finance, then I was detailed to the Internal Audit.
- Willens: Internal Audit?

- Pangelinan: Internal Audit. I was an internal auditor for the Trust Territory government. Then I was moved back to Finance again, stayed on for one year, then I finally got the job as a Treasurer.
- Willens: Treasurer of what?
- Pangelinan: Treasurer for the Trust Territory government, Micronesia-wide.
- Willens: For the entire TTPI government?
- Pangelinan: For the entire TTPI, yes.
- Willens: What were your responsibilities in the Finance Department at headquarters?
- Pangelinan: I became one of the senior accountants handling all kinds of ledgers, training new recruits in the areas of accrual accounting or government accounting.
- Willens: Did you play any role in helping to develop budget requests?
- Pangelinan: No, not budget. Budget has their own section or division with the Trust Territory government.
- Willens: What was it like as a Micronesian local person working for the Trust Territory in the 1960s? I have been told and I know that there were different pay schedules. I have heard reports that there was some complaint about the expatriates who were for the most part in the positions of responsibility. Could you give me some recollection as to how you felt as an employee with your background in the Trust Territory government at that time?
- Pangelinan: Frustrating, and many times, you get mad. As far as I'm concerned, I'm an accountant. There's another expatriate accountant doing the same kind of job, or lesser job, but I get like \$1.95 an hour, and the expatriate will get like a little bit more than \$10.00 an hour doing the same thing.
- Willens: And did you and others complain about that pay discrimination?
- Pangelinan: We did, through our local legislature and Municipal Council. The Municipal Council and the Legislature passed resolutions equal pay for equal work those kinds of resolutions. But then I felt worse when I became Treasurer, the treasurer job for Micronesia-wide. The person I replaced was an expatriate. That expatriate was getting like over \$30,000 a year plus overtime, housing, all kinds of benefits. All I got was \$2,800 a year two thousand eight hundred dollars a year as a Treasurer, responsible for millions of dollars of salary checks and payment checks. So naturally you get mad.
- Willens: What was the justification of the Trust Territory Administration for that differential pay scale?
- Pangelinan: They told us that it was, you know, they're the administering authority, they're U.S. citizens. We're Micronesians. They're here to help us. And they have to bring in those expatriates here. And the economy is low here in Micronesia, while the expatriates, they have all kinds of obligations and responsibilities back home. They sacrifice moving out here in this tropic climate, no air-conditioning, no snow, you know, nothing like that. So that's always been the excuses. And we have presented our grievances to the United Nations. The United Nations, we truly believed at that time, is working with the United States or taking whatever the United States tells them to do. So, the United Nations actually had, as far as we're concerned, no power over the United States to drastically tell the United States to do this, to do that; all it can do is recommend.

- Willens: Did you have any dealings with people at the Department of the Interior back in Washington with respect to problems like this?
- Pangelinan: Not directly, even though the Assistant Secretary every now and then, there will be a meeting with our legislators. The legislators will present grievances, and that will be the end of that.
- Willens: Do you have any recollection of any of the people at Interior during the 1960s and the 1970s? Let me mention a few names. Mr. Carver was an Undersecretary of Interior.
- Pangelinan: Don't know him.
- Willens: Ruth Van Cleve?
- Pangelinan: Ruth Van Cleve. Yes.
- Willens: Did you have the occasion to meet Mrs. Van Cleve on occasion?
- Pangelinan: Yes, on several occasions. Mrs. Van Cleve was an Assistant Secretary.
- Willens: And what was your assessment of her attitude toward Micronesia?
- Pangelinan: Oh, she's a typical bureaucrat from Washington, D.C.
- Willens: In what respect was she typical?
- Pangelinan: It was so much like talking to a deaf ear. Very nice lady, that's about it. She would listen to us, and that would be the end of that. No result, nothing.
- Willens: How about an Assistant Secretary named Harrison Loesch?
- Pangelinan: I don't know. I'm not familiar with him.
- Willens: Were there any other people from Interior that you do remember?
- Pangelinan: No. I try not to remember those kinds of people.
- Willens: What was your impression of the High Commissioners that you saw in the 1960s and the early 1970s?
- Pangelinan: Mr. Goding, I remember Mr. Goding. He was one of the early High Commissioners here. So people didn't have much to say about Mr. Goding.
- Willens: He was then followed by Mr. Norwood?
- Pangelinan: Then followed I believe by Mr. Norwood. Mr. Norwood was loved by the people here.
- Willens: He was what?
- Pangelinan: The people here liked him. He gets involved in the community. He and his wife will attend baptismal christening, wedding parties in the community. For the first time, a High Commissioner will go out into the villages and mingle, he and his wife, with the people.
- Willens: Was he the one who had Benitez as his deputy?
- Pangelinan: I believe so.
- Willens: I understand he was very active in the community.
- Pangelinan: Yes.
- Willens: And then Mr. Norwood was succeeded by Mr. Johnston?
- Pangelinan: Johnston.

- Willens: I understand from the press at least that there was some controversy about his appointment and performance.
- Pangelinan: Yes. It was in Johnston's period that the people here got so mad to the point we've had several demonstrations you know from going up, marching up to the headquarters, burning of the Trust Territory Code.
- Willens: What were the issues that led to that turmoil?
- Pangelinan: The people here felt Mr. Johnston really didn't like the Saipanese people. Because at that time our young educated people are beginning to come back. They have experienced democracy, more democracy, freedom of speech in the United States, so they came back and we became more vocal on a lot of issues.
- Willens: What kind of issues?
- Pangelinan: Well, from constructing more schools, education, minimum wage salaries, equal pay for equal work again.
- Willens: Did he feel that the Saipanese in particular were too demanding as compared with the other districts?
- Pangelinan: Yes, very demanding, like I said, very vocal. I believe we complained a lot. We submitted all kinds of complaints.
- Willens: Do you think in retrospect that was a good political tactic?
- Pangelinan: I believe so, not only that, but demonstrating, the Legislature putting out more resolutions, totally ignoring the mandate of the Trust Territory High Commissioner. So during Johnston's period we try to turn our face against High Commissioner Johnston. And besides, Mr. Johnston is spending more time abroad in the other districts of Micronesia than here on Saipan.
- Willens: One of the issues that came up during the 1960s, Mitch, was whether the people of Micronesia were ready for self-government. The federal employees back in Washington had different views on this subject. Did you have any sense that the people were or were not ready for more self-government in the 1960s?
- Pangelinan: As far as in the late 1960s, we were very aware, and we were very adamant that we are ready. We are ready for a major status change here in the late 1960s. More so than the other districts in Micronesia. Like I said, we're closer to Guam, Guam being the closest of the United States soil. We're always looking at Guam, the economic situation in Guam, and we're only 125 miles away from Guam. So here's Guam enjoying all kinds of economic progress.
- Willens: What was it on Guam in the late 1960s that seemed particularly attractive to the people in the Marianas?
- Pangelinan: Well, education.
- Willens: Education meaning up through college?
- Pangelinan: Up through college. They're more advanced, while here on Saipan they're teaching us English as a second language. That's one of the reasons why they brought in Peace Corps volunteers, to become teachers teaching the Saipanese and the Rotanese and the Tinianese how to learn English. I guess that was one of the keys, Guam being near us, we always looked at Guam, how they're progressing economically, and we're so behind. We're so behind on a lot of things.

- Willens: You mentioned earlier that the Popular Party was first oriented toward a reunification effort.
- Pangelinan: That's right.
- Willens: I understand, of course, that there were some referenda in the late 1960s both in Saipan and in Guam that did not produce favorable results in Guam to that objective. Was that the time at which the Popular Party decided to change its position and look for whatever means was available for a new relationship with the United States?
- Pangelinan: Yes, we gave Guam a second chance. We had an earlier referendum, Guam and the Marianas with the exception of Rota. Rota was still under Trust Territory at that time. We gave Guam a final chance in 1969 whether they're still interested in becoming reintegrated as one Marianas. The result here in the Northern Marianas was overwhelming, and Guam slapped us.
- Willens: Do you have any recollection as to what the reasons were for that result?
- Pangelinan: Their reason was that the majority of the people of Guam didn't want the Northern Marianas part of Guam because it would be an additional burden for them, building schools, building infrastructure, at that time. So that was the major reason. Why should they spend the Guam taxpayers' money to build or rebuild the Northern Marianas? It would be a total burden on them, so that was the major campaign at that time in Guam.
- Willens: Congressman Phil Burton from California favored reintegration. is that right?
- Pangelinan: Yes.
- Willens: He was always very interested in what was going on out here, but he did favor reunification of the Marianas with Guam, as I recall. Is that your understanding?
- Pangelinan: Yes, because Guam being the closest U.S. territorial possession in the United States, it makes sense. And Guam and the Marianas prior to the Spanish time were one Marianas.
- Willens: Do you think it will ever happen?
- Pangelinan: No.
- Willens: Not now?
- Pangelinan: Not now. Not in the future.
- Willens: Why is that?
- Pangelinan: So long as we are alive, people who experienced 1969, will continue to say no, no to Guam. Even though Governor Larry Guerrero and Governor Joe Ada [of Guam] envision one Marianas in the future, I think it's a dream, that's it, a vision, and that's about it, but it will never happen.
- Willens: Did you have any responsibility for dealing with the Congress of Micronesia in the 1960s?
- Pangelinan: As an active campaigner, if you want to call that, yes.
- Willens: Did you run for the Congress of Micronesia on any occasion?
- Pangelinan: No.
- Willens: But you remained active in the Popular Party leadership, isn't that correct?
- Pangelinan: Yes, supporting Herman, Eddie, former Governor Carlos Camacho.

- Willens: Was the Congress of Micronesia an important factor in the life of the Saipanese and the Tinianese at the time?
- Pangelinan: No, we didn't look at it that way.
- Willens: How did you view it?
- Pangelinan: We viewed the Congress of Micronesia as just another United States instrumentality.
- Willens: Did you support its formation?
- Pangelinan: No. We didn't support its formation.
- Willens: Why would you not do that?
- Pangelinan: Because we knew that it's just one of the gimmicks, like I said, an instrumentality just to keep the Micronesian people quiet.
- Willens: Is that because you felt it didn't really have any important power?
- Pangelinan: Exactly. It's not part of the three branches of the so-called Republican form of government. The Congress of Micronesia is not truly a second branch of a true government, it's almost like a rubber stamp organization, a scapegoat.
- Willens: Well, there were certainly times when the High Commissioner got very upset by what they did, but they had no control over the monies made available through the United States Congress, correct?
- Pangelinan: That's correct.
- Willens: And that was one main complaint?
- Pangelinan: That's correct.
- Willens: There also was a very substantial veto power by the High Commissioner, as I understand it.
- Pangelinan: A total veto power.
- Willens: And that was another source of limitation on their power?
- Pangelinan: That's correct.
- Willens: There are those who have written that the Congress of Micronesia was a very successful institution in fostering a sense of Micronesian unity. Do you have any reaction to that suggestion?
- Pangelinan: Probably in some of the districts of Micronesia, but to tell you the truth, look at the final result. It didn't really enlighten the Micronesian people. It disenfranchised them. Take a look at everything, Palau, Marshalls and the Marianas. So it did not actually accomplish what it was supposed to, you know, the goal of uniting Micronesians as one united Micronesian entity. It just didn't work.
- Willens: Well, there certainly were some leaders in Micronesia, like Mr. Salii, who from time to time would say that the Micronesian unity is a fiction, that there really is not much basis for unity in Micronesia because of the differences historically and culturally among the districts. What is your sense of that?
- Pangelinan: I have to agree. Culturally, we're totally different. The customs and culture are different. The people here in the Marianas were under four nations from the beginning, starting from the Spanish time, Germany, and so on. So it was impossible, as we see it, to unite Micronesia as one entity. But even among themselves, the leaders of the rest of Micronesia,

that were behind one united Micronesia or one state at the end, just didn't work. Didn't materialize. We have a segregated Micronesia right now—separate.

Willens: When do you think that the Marianas desire for a separate status really gained momentum?

Pangelinan: I believe immediately after the Guam referendum result.

Willens: Shortly thereafter, the United States presented what was called a commonwealth proposal to the Congress of Micronesia negotiating committee that was rejected by the Congress of Micronesia. The Marianas representatives thought that although it was not satisfactory in all respects, it nonetheless was closer to what the Marianas citizens wanted. Was that an important development?

Pangelinan: It was important as far as timing is concerned. The timing was just right. Guam had slapped us down in 1969, then the Congress of Micronesia, we looked at the Congress of Micronesia, and it continues to deteriorate as far as enlightening Micronesia is concerned. Then here came a proposal from the United States for one commonwealth, Micronesian commonwealth. So we took a look at that, and the Popular Party at the time looked at it, we looked at it very carefully, and we said, "Why not commonwealth, you know, why continue to bother and spend our time with Guam? Here's an opportunity. Let's grab it." But then at that time, we have two separate parties here in the Marianas.

Willens: I was about to ask you about the Territorial Party and what its position was with respect to status at that time?

Pangelinan: The Popular Party, after we looked at the United States commonwealth package, we looked at it even though we did not agree totally with the package, but we envisioned that we will be able to negotiate, get rid of some of those parts, keep the important parts that will benefit not only our islands but our people here. The Territorial Party, on the other hand, used to support commonwealth, but then later on when the Popular Party decided to pick up the commonwealth, they decided to go direct, you know, to negotiate direct and become one of the states of the United States. And we knew that the United States would not, we're talking impossibility now, the chances of being listened to by United States to become one of the states of the United States at that particular period. It is almost an impossible thing.

Willens: Who were the leaders in the Territorial Party at the time?

Pangelinan: Oscar Rasa. But then Dr. Palacios and Oly later on. Oly Borja came to us because Oly was serving in the Congress of Micronesia.

Willens: I have read that in the 1970 elections, the Popular Party won all the positions because they took a strong position in pro-commonwealth, and Senator Borja of the other party, did not have to run at that time as I recall . . .

Pangelinan: That's right.

Willens: . . .and he subsequently changed positions?

Pangelinan: Changed positions, that's right.

Willens: Could you give me a little picture of Senator Borja as you knew him in those days?

Pangelinan: He's one of the leaders and you can say our opponent as far as parties are concerned.

Willens: Was he a good speaker?

Pangelinan: You could say he's a good speaker. He speaks a lot. He speaks long.

- Willens: Was he a good campaigner?
- Pangelinan: As far as I'm concerned, my personal feeling, no. I never respect people who talk a lot. Doesn't mean much, what they're saying. Always redundant, repeating himself so many times. At the end, it dilutes the points that he's trying to get across. Even as a Senator for Congress of Micronesia. Bless his soul.
- Willens: He had an economic interest on the island, did he not?
- Pangelinan: Yes, he owned his own business. He has a retail outlet here. So, as a businessman and as a politician, he has to always play on a lot of sides, try to make a lot of people happy.
- Willens: How would you contrast him with Dr. Palacios? What is your recollection of Dr. Palacios?
- Pangelinan: I have more respect for Dr. Palacios. Dr. Palacios is very straight. He'll tell you directly how he feels about an issue or a thing, short and straight. Even though at the end he may be wrong, but he will tell you how he feels about it.
- Willens: He was very active in status issues as a member of the Congress of Micronesia Future Status Commission. Is it your understanding that he was a supporter of a separate Marianas status, or do you think he would have preferred to have the Marianas stay with the rest of Micronesia?
- Pangelinan: Who, Dr. Palacios?
- Willens: Yes.
- Pangelinan: No. At that time, even the Territorial Party at least they have agreed with us that we cannot stay with the rest of Micronesia. One way or the other, we have to find a political status with the United States, be it free associated state with the United States or a direct so-called statehood or commonwealth. So, based on that, even the Territorial Party is looking toward the United States. They totally abandoned the idea of a united Micronesian status, like one statehood for all of Micronesia including the Marianas.
- Willens: How about the Carolinian community? I've heard it said that at the time they were the most reluctant to seek a separate status relationship rather than stay within the structure of Micronesia as a whole.
- Pangelinan: No, like I said, it's a political party thing, and the Territorial Party at that period of time, they weren't talking about uniting Micronesia, but a direct or a free associated state. So, even the Carolinians under the Territorial Party were aiming directly toward the United States and not toward Micronesia. They were also looking at their original ancestry which is from Truk and Yap.
- Willens: Did you say they were or they were not?
- Pangelinan: Yes, they were looking toward the United States and not uniting with Micronesia, the Carolinians.
- Willens: How about the business community? There was a time at which some of the leading business figures on the island were apprehensive about a commonwealth status that might open up the Northern Marianas to competition from Japanese or United States mainland economic enterprises. Was the business community represented principally by the Territorial Party?

- Pangelinan: Practically all of the businessmen you can count at that time, Joeten, Oly Borja, Manny Villagomez, and Vicente Sablan (the Sablan enterprise), all of them are under the Territorial Party. They were the leaders.
- Willens: Why was it that they favored the Territorial Party rather than the Popular Party? Was your party anti-business in their opinion?
- Pangelinan: Not anti-business, but it was a coincidence that the Territorial Party was formed, originally formed by these businessmen, either to protect their business entity or their interests, while the Popular Party at that time was formed from the people.
- Willens: I just want to mention a few additional names. You mentioned the names of Herman Q. Guerrero and Edward Pangelinan. When did you first meet those two individuals?
- Pangelinan: I knew Herman from earlier days. We were in the same Young Popular Party organization, the young people. Eddie, I met Eddie later on, when he came back from school. After he had attained his law degrees, he came back to Saipan, and I believe he worked for Joeten's outlet for about a year or something like that. Then he decided he wants to run for public office. For some reason he decided to join our party, the Popular Party at that time. When he decided that he is interested to run for Congress of Micronesia, we accepted him, and he won the election, became one of the Senators.
- Willens: What was the process by which one could become accepted by the party in those days? Did you have an open primary or a closed system?
- Pangelinan: It's a closed system. It's almost like a family system type. Eddie, being a new graduate, one of the first, I think he was the first attorney to graduate with a law background, it was an opportunity for the Popular Party at that time to win the election.
- Willens: Was he a good campaigner?
- Pangelinan: Eddie? Yes. Yes.
- Willens: Were his campaigns at that time almost entirely in Chamorro?
- Pangelinan: It was totally in Chamorro and in Carolinian, a combination. We have our own supporter who speaks Carolinian. English wasn't used practically at all at that time.
- Willens: In the late 1960s?
- Pangelinan: In the late 1960s, no. Because actually there were no American voters, Americans from the United States who are eligible to vote here, because you have to be a Trust Territory citizen and not a United States citizen, so that totally closed the door for any United States citizen at that time to vote for local office.
- Willens: What was your reaction and assessment of Herman Q. Guerrero as a young politician in those days?
- Pangelinan: Herman was not a college graduate, but the guy is sharp, very smart on a lot of the local issues. One of his greatest assets is that he is able to listen to the people. And use that, collectively analyzing that then making a decision afterward. He is the kind of person that always thinks twice before he does anything. He's a pretty good listener. That's why I can admire Herman more so than Eddie, being an attorney. Herman is a good listener.
- Willens: But they worked very actively as you know as representatives from the Marianas on the Joint Status Committee of the Congress of Micronesia. Did they consult with you or other Marianas political leaders as they participated in the Joint Committee?

- Pangelinan: Very closely. During that period, it's the leadership of the party was composed of the officers of the party and members of our Congressional delegation. There is no one individual making decisions. It's always a group collective decision, it's close-knit decision making. So it was a very close communication between our members in the Congress of Micronesia and the party.
- Willens: And with respect to the status issues, is it correct then to assume that the Territorial Party was not as familiar with what Herman Q. Guerrero and Edward Pangelinan were doing in the Joint Committee as you were?
- Pangelinan: That's correct.
- Willens: Because Eddie Pangelinan and Herman Guerrero were Popular Party representatives?
- Pangelinan: That's correct.
- Willens: Did you have any specific recollections of instances where they consulted with you and others about what position to take, specifically with respect to when they should request Ambassador Williams to agree to separate negotiations? Do you have any recollections of when that decision was made and how it was made?
- Pangelinan: It all began after several meetings, as soon as we've had that opportunity to look at the commonwealth package. And we looked at the Guam situation. We had many meetings, nightly meetings, small meetings, gatherings, within the villages. That's how we finally decided at the end to take this route over the other political status route. And at that time the Popular Party controlled not only the District Legislature, but also the Municipal Council. So we had an advantage of public facilities for meetings at that particular time. And I guess at the end it was after several studies, meetings, discussions, when it was finally decided that we'll take this route. The Congress of Micronesia will be meeting in Palau, and this particular meeting will be the ultimate, either make or break from the rest of Micronesia.
- Willens: You're referring to a Congress of Micronesia session in Palau?
- Pangelinan: In Palau. That's when Eddie and Herman I believe presented a prepared statement of the Marianas feelings.
- Willens: There was a fourth round of Micronesian negotiations in Palau in April 1972. But in the earlier year, in 1971, Ambassador Williams was appointed to represent the United States. What was your understanding of his appointment? Did it have any impact on you and your colleagues here in the Marianas?
- Pangelinan: No. The only impact is that we have an opportunity. It opened up the door to pursue the status that we desire.
- Willens: In the fall of 1971 in Hawaii, the third round of Micronesian negotiations took place, and there was an occasion during those negotiations when Eddie and Herman Q. met privately with the Ambassador's Deputy, Mr. Wilson, I believe, and the issue then was not only whether to request separate negotiations but how to do it and when to do it and what the United States would say. Did you hear any reports back from Eddie and Herman about those discussions?
- Pangelinan: The only report we got back from them is that there may be an opportunity. It seems like the rest of Micronesian negotiation is not going forward. The report, and based on what we know, what's happening with the rest of Micronesian negotiation at that time, we felt that we just couldn't go along with them. We would become a victim of the rest of the Micronesia, become a minority, not only in the economics. So I think it was an

instruction to Eddie and Herman to keep pursuing if possible during negotiation, but privately, the possibility of a separate negotiation for the Marianas, because we wouldn't go along with whatever result the rest of Micronesia would have at that time. We have already decided, at least our party, decided that we are not going to become part of Micronesia any more. We want to go on our own.

Willens: By that time, the Congress of Micronesia had developed its four principles and had communicated those to the United States delegation. I gather from what you say that those four principles pointed in the direction that was contrary to where you and your colleagues wanted to go.

Pangelinan: That's correct. And that's when we started pushing aggressively to find ways, seek ways to have our own entirely separate negotiation with the United States for separate status.

Willens: There were some issues in the Congress of Micronesia that you made reference to earlier I believe that related to such matters as taxation, and I think there were proposals in the Congress of Micronesia to tax the tourist industry in some respect that would obviously have fallen more heavily on the Northern Marianas than other districts. Were issues like that also important to you?

Pangelinan: Very important, very important as it relates to our educational system, our educational infrastructure here, the quality of our teachers here. We looked at all these avenues, and we looked at the amount of money that we're getting by sharing with the rest of the Trust Territory. Tourism is starting, there's going to be a certain percentage of room tax, and we totally believed that most of this money will not stay here in the Marianas. Instead it will be divided up with the rest of Micronesia. Not only that, there was a frustration also at that time that many of our young people who came back from abroad from education weren't given a high excellent position with the government with the exception later on of John Sablan being appointed as a deputy at the tail end of the Trust Territory. But that particular point, it was a little bit late. The people of the Marianas have already decided to seek a different route.

Willens: But there were many strongly stated resolutions to that effect. In February 1971 there was a resolution enacted by the District Legislature threatening to secede from the Trust Territory. Did you have any role in bringing that about?

Pangelinan: As a supporter, yes, again, as a party member. It was almost like no way of turning back the clock. We decided that we have committed ourselves, we want to go forward. Win or lose, let's do it, even if we have to be very disrespectful to the United States government. We have to do it, so we finally forced our District Legislature [to act]. Again, a majority of them were controlled by the Popular Party. At that time, everything they do is decided under the umbrella or auspices of the Popular Party.

Willens: Who were the other leaders in the party at that time?

Pangelinan: Ben Santos.

Willens: Dan Muna?

Pangelinan: Danny Muna. John Cabrera, the now-deceased Santiago Magofna, the former judge Felipe Salas.

Willens: He's still on the island?

Pangelinan: He's still on the island.

Willens: Where is Herman Q. Guerrero, incidentally? I heard he was working in Hawaii.

- Pangelinan: I don't know if he's working. I know that before they were staying in Oregon. But then I was told that Herman cannot stand the weather, the winter weather. It's so bad that he couldn't stand it. So they finally decided to sell their house there and get a place in Hawaii.
- Willens: Who is in contact with him if I wanted to find out where he is located?
- Pangelinan: Probably his son Robert. He works at the Community and Cultural Affairs Office. He's a deputy director there now.
- Willens: You mentioned the resolution threatening to secede and that was followed within hours by the burning of the Congress of Micronesia facilities.
- Pangelinan: I was a part of the burning.
- Willens: You were a part of the burning?
- Pangelinan: That was again a united decision. We started the meeting over several days, and it was a continuous thing on a daily basis, and finally in the morning, I can't recall the day of the week, but Oly Borja was there, Ben Santos was there. Oly was with us [the Popular Party] through commonwealth. We had a final meeting one morning at the municipal building, and it was decided that morning that we're going to march up to the Trust Territory headquarters. First thing we want to do is tear the Trust Territory Code as a show that we are no longer interested in being with the Trust Territory government, we want to go on our own. I think it's more we want to be heard, we want to be listened to, that what we were saying, not only the resolution but in the newspaper, we meant it.
- Willens: You're referring to the demonstration that included a march and the destruction of the TTPI Code. I forget whether any flags were involved.
- Pangelinan: Not the flags. We never did burn U.S. flags. I believe it was a Trust Territory flag that was torn apart.
- Willens: Was this at the same or about that the buildings themselves were burned down?
- Pangelinan: The burning of the Congress of Micronesia building I think took place a few days later.
- Willens: And who was responsible for that?
- Pangelinan: I don't know. It was never known. The police, the Attorney General at that time, Robert Miyamoto, Tony Benavente, he already passed away, was the sheriff at that time. But for some reason they never found out. My personal belief was that it was burned by our opponents to blame the Popular Party. We looked at it that way.
- Willens: Did it have an impact on the Congress of Micronesia?
- Pangelinan: I believe so. They finally moved to another district to have their own meetings.
- Willens: They did go to another district. I think it was Palau. And then there was a boycott, a brief boycott of that Congressional session by the Marianas representative. Did you support that boycott?
- Pangelinan: Yes.
- Willens: What was the point of that?
- Pangelinan: Again, to show them that we're no longer interested to be part of the rest of Micronesia.
- Willens: Why was it so short-lived, just a few days?

- Pangelinan: Because Felipe Atalig became—I don't know how you say it in English—Felipe was playing both sides. I believe he's a very close friend of Oscar Rasa, Oscar being a neighbor from the same village. We totally believe that Felipe is being maneuvered and manipulated by Oscar Rasa at that time. So Felipe went by himself. Then the Popular Party decided that it's best that we send our delegation just to make sure that Felipe doesn't become our official spokesman for the Marianas. That's why that boycott was short-lived. We decided to go ahead and send them to watch our interests.
- Willens: After Ambassador Williams agreed to separate negotiations, he visited in Saipan in April 1972. Did you meet him on that occasion?
- Pangelinan: Yes, I was a member of the Municipal Council at that time.
- Willens: What was your impression of him at that time?
- Pangelinan: He was sincere. We totally believed that we will be having our own separate negotiation. So at that particular meeting, we tried to impress upon Ambassador Williams that we meant business, we meant what we've said, we meant everything based on our actions in the past. So the first meeting was to impress, or to try to totally impress, that we're serious.
- Willens: As I understand the records, he basically responded by saying that it was up to the Marianas leaders to develop a committee or commission that would represent the community. How did it come about that you became a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission?
- Pangelinan: Well, the District Legislature I believe is empowered or has the authority to come up with legislation. They have to pass a bill to make it official. At that time I believe Frank Ada was here, was the District Administrator, no, was a Deputy, Deputy District Administrator. Later on Mr. Canham, Mr. Erwin Canham, came in during transition. Yes, it was Ada, the early Administrator. So I believe that district administration, Frank Ada being the District Administrator, is fully aware of the situation here.
- Willens: Was he generally supportive of the separate negotiations effort?
- Pangelinan: We didn't care.
- Willens: Was he viewed by you as having an allegiance to other political party, or was he viewed by you as neutral?
- Pangelinan: We believed that he's part of the Trust Territory.
- Willens: What did that mean? If he was part of the Trust Territory, was he not part of the Marianas?
- Pangelinan: That's right. That's right. We believe at that time that everything we try to do here in the Marianas, Frank will not make any decisions, he cannot make a unilateral decision without clearing with the top officials, the High Commissioner and the Department of Interior.
- Willens: Did the High Commissioner and his people at the Trust Territory headquarters have any position one way or the other with respect to Marianas desire for separate negotiations?
- Pangelinan: No.
- Willens: Were they neutral on the matter?
- Pangelinan: They tried to be. They were neutral because they were trying to get the rest of Micronesia into one unity, one entity, so they're busy. Their bigger problem is the five districts of

- Micronesia. We're only one problem, small problem here. I believe at the end they finally gave in. I believe they just said, "Que sera, sera. Marianas, if you want to go on your own, go find your ways to do it alone."
- Willens: The Marianas District Legislature did enact a law in May 1972 creating the 15-person Commission, and subsequently in August it was reported that 15 members were appointed and that you were the designated representative of the Popular Party.
- Pangelinan: That's correct.
- Willens: Was there competition for that honor?
- Pangelinan: Not for me. I believe it was an honor, and they knew my capability.
- Willens: Did you want to be a member?
- Pangelinan: Yes.
- Willens: Did other people want to be a member of the Commission from your party?
- Pangelinan: Some of them. But I have the—what do you call that—almost like an ace, because I've worked for the party since the Young Popular Party days. I'm more outspoken, I'm more of an SOB type person, I can speak out my mind.
- Willens: Were you in the Municipal Council at the time?
- Pangelinan: Yes.
- Willens: Were you in the Municipal Council at the same time that you were Treasurer?
- Pangelinan: No, no longer. I was with the Peace Corps.
- Willens: The Peace Corps was a full-time job and the Municipal Council was a part-time job, is that correct?
- Pangelinan: That's right. But there was an Executive Order from the District Administrator telling all agencies including the United States Peace Corps that whoever is appointed to become a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission shall be given an administrative leave for the duration of the negotiation preparation and all that thing.
- Willens: So you had a leave from the Peace Corps?
- Pangelinan: Yes, administrative leave, paid administrative leave.
- Willens: And did you stay as a member of the Municipal Council during the time that you served on the Commission?
- Pangelinan: Yes. The Municipal Council is a part-time job, yes. We only meet at night-time or in a special session.
- Willens: Could you describe that building that we held those meetings in? That was the Saipan Municipal Council building, wasn't it?
- Pangelinan: Yes.
- Willens: Is it still standing?
- Pangelinan: It's still standing. The first floor is totally occupied by the Mayor's office. The second floor now is occupied 50% by the Mayor's staff; the other 50% is being occupied by the Language Commission.
- Willens: As I recall, it was one large room at the time, with one large square arrangement of tables and a balcony around a few sides, maybe three sides of the building?

- Pangelinan: No, two sides.
- Willens: Two sides?
- Pangelinan: Single stairs.
- Willens: Why was that selected as the place for the Commission to meet?
- Pangelinan: That was the most convenient place. The District Legislature was using it because at that time I believe the District Legislature became full-time year-around. Legislators had their own separate committees. The building is being used on a daily basis, so the only available facility that we can call our own is the municipal building at that time, Municipal Council being a part-time job, so that was the only infrastructure available.
- Willens: The records indicate that the Commission met about three times before the negotiations opened in December 1972. They elected officers, designated committees and generally went about the process of retaining consultants. What do you remember about those organizational meetings, if anything?
- Pangelinan: I guess it was very simple, Eddie being a Senator from the Congress of Micronesia with a little background. We have decided that Eddie should become chairman. As far as chairman for the committee, finance, economic, we put Joeten in the beginning as a chairman for that committee, then as you recall later on, he resigned.
- Willens: Why did he resign?
- Pangelinan: The only reason that we got at that time is that his business needs him. He has to spend more time with his business outlets.
- Willens: But isn't it true that he also disagreed with the direction of the negotiations, or do you think that he was in full agreement with what the Commission was doing?
- Pangelinan: Yes. Joeten also being one of the leaders of the Territorial Party, there was a different status idea or vision. I guess that was a secondary reason, I believe, for resigning.
- Willens: How did it come about that Joe Screen was designated as a consultant?
- Pangelinan: Joe Screen was working for Joeten; he's Joeten's boy. Joe Screen has a CPA background. And he worked for the Trust Territory Administration. It's very obvious that Joeten's boy will do anything that Joeten tells him to do.
- Willens: What was your assessment of his abilities?
- Pangelinan: I believe at that time that Joe Screen is very biased.
- Willens: In what respect?
- Pangelinan: He only does what Joeten tells him to do, and that's it. He doesn't want to do what the Commission recommends. I believe later on we became better off without Joe Screen.
- Willens: What was your impression of the opening round of negotiations which, as you may remember, was just two days. The first day was a formal session at Mt. Carmel, and then there was a meeting at the Royal Taga Hotel that people could attend. On the second day, there were so-called working sessions where there was somewhat more discussion of issues. Do you have any recollection of what issues were presented at that time?
- Pangelinan: No, not really. Not in detail.
- Willens: Were you pleased with the event? Do you think it went off as the Commission had hoped?

- Pangelinan: My feeling of the whole situation was in the beginning was one of frustration. Because after we started the negotiation, it seemed like the U.S. side was treating us like a bunch of kindergartners, kids, and Eddie is being treated like one of the students. And Eddie is letting it go.
- Willens: Do you have some specific recollections that led you to that?
- Pangelinan: Yes. We had several arguments with Eddie, you know, that this is what we want done, and Eddie would give us a lot of run around. Of all the members, I guess I was the only one that got so pissed off that at the end, remember at one of the negotiations, I had to tell Ambassador Williams, I even used a bad word, to stop treating us like a bunch of kids? I believe there was a lady there; I had to apologize to her.
- Willens: Was it Mary Vance Trent?
- Pangelinan: Mary Vance Trent.
- Willens: Was that in the course of a working session, or was it in a private meeting?
- Pangelinan: It's a working session, face to face.
- Willens: Do you remember what the issue was that provoked you?
- Pangelinan: It's a collective thing. From the first day of the negotiations, Ambassador Williams and the rest of his colleagues, kept treating us like we're still under the Trust Territory thing, treating us like a bunch of peons, we don't know what we want, we don't know what we're doing. The rest are being very nice, being Micronesians, you know. Unfortunately, I wasn't born Micronesian, and I couldn't stand people giving me the run around. We're dealing with peoples' lives here, my people, because I continue to represent them in the Municipal Council, and even my colleagues are playing games with the United States, and if the United States continues to treat them like we're a bunch of school children, then I'm wasting my time. There were a lot of arguments, private arguments, among ourselves, when you guys weren't around, our counsels. We would argue, we discuss, we had all kinds of presentations. But then when, especially myself, couldn't get Eddie to tell the United States, you know, let's just sit down, just say yes or no, you give this to us or you don't.
- Willens: My recollection is that the Commission tried very hard to develop a consensus and that it was a Micronesian way of doing business in the sense that people were allowed to talk and express their views and the effort was to try to bring everyone to a common point of view. Is that your recollection, too, of how the Commission worked together?
- Pangelinan: Remember there were separate meetings between our officers or Eddie will have a separate meeting with Ambassador Williams?
- Willens: Oh, yes. That was frequently done.
- Pangelinan: It was those meetings that we'd tell Eddie, this is what you should try and get across. And then later on after the meeting, Eddie would come back to us and give us the run around. I just couldn't buy that. Time is very important. To continue to negotiate and to continue to go around and around, it's very frustrating. So when I couldn't get Eddie to tell Ambassador Williams, if you cannot give this to us, tell us no. It's a yes or no answer. That's why in one of the working sessions I finally had to stand up and tell Ambassador Williams, let's negotiate professionally, one to one. Stop treating us like a bunch of kids. I even said a nasty word, "God damn it," at that particular working session. My colleagues almost fell from the chair, because a Micronesian wouldn't do that. But I told them, I said, unfortunately, I wasn't born Micronesian. I'm here to represent my people, and if you guys are playing around, then I'm not.

- Willens: Was it your impression at the early stages of the negotiations that the United States had a clear idea of what they wanted the MPSC to agree to?
- Pangelinan: Yes.
- Willens: What did you understand to be their objective?
- Pangelinan: Seems like they're shoving us with a lot of things. There are a lot of nitty-gritty things that collectively [were important], but the worst thing is being treated like we don't know what we're doing. We accept what they offer us. That really bothered me.
- Willens: This may be delicate, but let me ask you some questions about how counsel was retained and what assistance or problems that counsel gave you, because the idea of having a law firm to represent the Commission was to help the Commission become informed about the issues, to make its own decision, and then help prepare position papers to negotiate from. Do you think that process worked out well?
- Pangelinan: Yes, I believe it did. It did, except in the economic and finance [area] I wasn't very happy.
- Willens: Why was that?
- Pangelinan: I really believed that we could have gotten more.
- Willens: More money?
- Pangelinan: Not only that. When Ambassador Williams of the United States team specifically told us that the reason why we didn't need that much more money is because there's going to be 6,000 military personnel in Tinian, they'll be spending all the taxes (based on Section 30 or something) that will come back to us. I envision, I've had my own thinking, that it will not happen. It will not happen. We wouldn't see any military installation in Tinian as they have presented to us, and I continue to push Eddie, let's continue to push this forward. We need to have a guarantee that there's going to be a military installation, that there's going to be 5,000, 6,000 personnel working in Tinian, will be generating an additional \$10-15 million a year on top of the Covenant money agreement. But those are the things. That's exactly what happened. No military personnel except for a small exercise on Tinian, and that's basically it.
- Willens: That's right. I mean the United States informed the MPSC in December 1973 that the military plans had now changed, and that opened up some of these issues again for negotiations. During the spring 1973 meeting, the United States laid out for the first time its detailed plans to seek all of Tinian and then lease back one-third. In fact, there was a headline in the *Pacific Daily News* reflecting a leak of the U.S. proposals along this line. One of the results was a long meeting over in Tinian at which Ambassador Williams and the military people laid out the plans and they were translated into Chamorro by Eddie and I think one of the others. Were you there that evening in Tinian?
- Pangelinan: I believe so.
- Willens: What was your impression of public sentiment on Tinian in particular to the kinds of demands that the United States was proposing?
- Pangelinan: Only those Tinianese who were leasing or utilizing the two-thirds of the island for cattle grazing were against it, but then later on I believe they were satisfied that they can be leased back to them to continue the grazing. The Bar K Ranch, you know, [Ken] Jones, they were totally against, because the United States presentation at that time is that they're going to develop, remember, a major development for the village of Tinian. The U.S. will build a totally new village, new schools, new church, house for every family.

- Willens: That had a great impact, did it not?
- Pangelinan: The people were totally against it. They were regretting it later.
- Willens: They were what?
- Pangelinan: The majority of the people of Tinian regretted turning that offer down.
- Willens: So they did not want the village relocated?
- Pangelinan: No. They want to stay where they are.
- Willens: You say that later on they came to regret that decision?
- Pangelinan: They should have accepted that offer.
- Willens: It wouldn't have made any difference in view of what happened.
- Pangelinan: Well, probably they would have a new Tinian village by now, where Marpo village is. Remember they were offering Marpo, Marpo village, is supposed to be developed for a super Tinian village, modern. Look at what happened now. They divided up Marpo Valley and it's given out as homesteads. So those people who are in Marpo now are saying that we should have accepted it. We would be staying in 3- or 4-bedroom house now, with modern water, schools, church, everything, instead of us now scrounging around for money to build our own decent house.
- Willens: Do you think Ambassador Williams was effective in those public meetings in explaining the U.S. position?
- Pangelinan: Not really. But with the help of the Marianas Political Status Commission to further explain it, you know, after the agreement, explaining it to the people of Tinian in our own style and vernacular, I believe it got through. It got through. It worked.
- Willens: One of the other issues that came up early in the negotiations was the question of self-government and exactly how much self-government the Marianas would have under their future commonwealth status. Do you remember any discussions on that subject with the Ambassador or other members of the U.S. delegation?
- Pangelinan: All I can recall was that different form of government, whether a parliamentary type like the British or a three branch government.
- Willens: The United States made it rather clear that they wanted to have a republican form of government.
- Pangelinan: Right. Dr. Palacios was strongly recommending a parliamentary type like the British-type.
- Willens: During the negotiations in May 1973 there were some newspaper reports that unnamed members of the Commission were unhappy with the way it was going. Some people were quoted as saying that they felt unprepared in negotiating with the United States. Did you feel unprepared?
- Pangelinan: I don't know. Not me. The unpreparedness, again, we were pointing our finger at our chairman Eddie. Eddie, we believed, was a little bit weak. Not a wish to replace him, but we tried to force Eddie to be a little bit more stronger in presenting what we want to Ambassador Williams. At the end, at least for my part, I suspected that Eddie is just playing along with Ambassador Williams, especially when the transition office was created and Eddie became the paid director. And so was Pete A. Tenorio, was one of the paid staff.

Willens: Did you personally ever have any meetings with Ambassador Williams sort of one-to-one where he tried to discuss an issue with you?

Pangelinan: No, I really believed that Ambassador Williams didn't like me, because I was very vocal.

Willens: Did members of his staff, including the military people, ever try to approach you and persuade you that you should be taking a different position?

Pangelinan: Wilson did, and what's the name of that Interior guy?

Willens: Jim Berg?

Pangelinan: Yes. Jim Berg.

Willens: Do you remember what issues were raised in those presentations?

Pangelinan: If I remember, he was talking to me in one of the receptions.

Willens: Do you remember any complaints being made to you about your consultants and the positions that the consultants were recommending to you?

Pangelinan: In an informal gathering, they talked a lot about the consultants, telling us that it seemed like the consultants are telling us what to do and not us telling the consultants what to do. But we didn't agree with them. We told them, "You guys are totally wet."

Willens: Mitch, we were talking about some of the issues raised during the negotiations, and you've made reference to the way in which you and other members of the Commission felt you were treated. Did you feel that the U.S. delegation had some timetable in mind at the beginning of the negotiations?

Pangelinan: Yes, I believe so. They presented their package. They want us to accept it, what they presented to us, on face value. They want it done fast. And us, we didn't want to do that, because after every session, we have to go back to our people and present what we have accomplished, what we haven't done, what issues where we ended up with a stalemate, we have to go through that. Unlike the United States, they only report to the President of the United States, one person. Us, we have to go to the whole entire island, Tinian, Rota and Saipan, and report to the people what we have accomplished. But all along, the United States from the beginning, they want it done fast, want an accelerated tempo.

Willens: Did they think that the Commission's consultants were complicating life?

Pangelinan: That's how they perceived it, I believe. But it was our doing, because we didn't want to move too fast, and then regret it later. I believe in some of the cases, I believe some of the issues we may have moved too fast, and I presented some of it earlier. But I guess the United States were frustrated believing that let's present our package, they will accept it lock, stock and barrel, then we just wrap it up, just like that, and I believe they were wrong. They were frustrated.

Willens: You mentioned earlier that you think in particular that the financial arrangements that were finally reached might have been improved on with more negotiations, in particular after the plans for Tinian were changed. Is that correct?

Pangelinan: I believe so.

Willens: Were there other issues that you felt were not given sufficient attention or should have been pursued over a longer period of time?

Pangelinan: Yes, in the mutual consent section, I thought all along that we can expand further, especially in the areas where the United States will have a total authority in implementing U.S. laws, making U.S. laws applicable here in the Northern Marianas, that may not be

suitable to us here or compatible to our island situation, which is 10,000 miles away from Washington, D.C. That's one of the areas, and we are experiencing that dilemma now in some of the laws that are being made applicable here.

Willens: Which laws do you think present the greatest difficulty under the current Commonwealth system?

Pangelinan: I believe the intrusion of the Department of the Interior in so-called self-government, internal self-government here.

Willens: Let's come to that later on. But stepping back from the negotiations, the Covenant was finally approved and signed on February 15, 1975. My recollection is that there was a very emotional session among the Commission members in discussing whether or not to approve the Covenant. Do you have any recollection of positions taken by members of the Commission as to whether or not to approve the Covenant?

Pangelinan: Yes. The major discussion at that time after looking at the overall package, some members are looking at individual sections. The rest of us, we're not totally satisfied with the result of the package. But looking at it in general, the entire package, we say it's satisfactory, we can live with it, provided that we can continue to have a dialogue with the U.S. side down the road.

Willens: That was a very statesmanlike position. Everyone had some dissatisfaction in the package, and the question was whether for the first time you could represent your people and put before them a choice as to a future status. There was an election as I recall in November 1974 which resulted in the defeat of Eddie Pangelinan. The Territorial Party won some of the key Congress of Micronesia positions, and that resulted in new members joining the Commission, specifically I think Oscar Rasa and I forget whether it was Pete A. Tenorio at that time.

Pangelinan: Yes, Pete A. Tenorio.

Willens: And you remember, that election I believed involved the status issue, and the Territorial Party may have taken a position that the negotiations were proceeding too rapidly. What is your recollection of status as a political issue in that campaign in 1974?

Pangelinan: As I recall, it has nothing to do with moving too fast or moving too slow. The Popular Party had decided at that time that we didn't want to have anything to do with the Congress of Micronesia. We are already negotiating our own package. Why should we have a candidate running for Congress of Micronesia?

Willens: But you did have candidates, did you not?

Pangelinan: We did. We forced ourselves to go in. But we didn't actively campaign.

Willens: I see.

Pangelinan: We didn't care. Let's put it that way. We didn't care much if we win or lose. We no longer have any status with Congress of Micronesia. Whoever wants to run, if they run, it will be short-lived at that time.

Willens: Were you hoping to have separate administration of the Marianas District as soon as the status agreement was signed?

Pangelinan: Yes. And even at the period of time, Mr. Canham was appointed, so we practically have our own separate entity.

Willens: He was appointed to help out with the plebiscite.

- Pangelinan: Right, as a Plebiscite Commissioner.
- Willens: Going back to the election, though, and the fact that Mr. Rasa and Pete A. Tenorio came on the Commission, it is my recollection that they were opening up some of the issues that had been previously negotiated and that there was a real threat to the Commission being able to complete its task. What is your recollection?
- Pangelinan: No. Even at that time, we believed that there was no threat. We still have the majority. We are still intact. So Pete A. Tenorio nor Oscar Rasa, didn't bother us one way or the other.
- Willens: Had you worked with Oscar Rasa before in any capacity?
- Pangelinan: No.
- Willens: What was your impression then of him?
- Pangelinan: Oscar's brother attended school in Russia, so we were looking at Oscar as being very, very anti-American, anti-U.S. They just don't want to have anything to do with the United States but to rabble-rouse, continue to rock the boat or slow the process down.
- Willens: Was he a successful political leader in the Marianas?
- Pangelinan: Short-lived. For a short while. We knew that eventually he will self-destruct politically and everything. At least I knew that.
- Willens: And is that what happened?
- Pangelinan: That's what happened.
- Willens: How about your prior experience with Pete A. Tenorio?
- Pangelinan: Pete A., just like Eddie, we were classmates from elementary school. But again, Pete A.'s personality is totally different, and he's more closely associated with the business side. He is cousin of Joeten. He's very close to Joeten and the major businesses here on the island. So I knew Pete as a colleague of mine on the Foreign Investment Board. I worked with him on the foreign investments. He always changes his position, like a chameleon. That's his way from that time to this time. I still don't like Pete, professionally or politically.
- Willens: But you felt when it came to voting time that there were sufficient votes on the Commission to endorse the Covenant. I forget whether there was a quorum requirement of ten out of 15 votes.
- Pangelinan: I think it required two-thirds.
- Willens: Two-thirds. I guess that would be ten out of 15, that would be two-thirds, so your feeling was that even if you lost some of the members of the Territorial Party, that there still would be ten firm votes on the Commission?
- Pangelinan: Right. It won't break, because Rota is behind Commonwealth.
- Willens: Let's talk about that a little bit. At the very late stages of the negotiations in February 1975, there was a proposal by Rota and Tinian to have a bicameral legislature and of course that did find its way into a Covenant and has been something that the Commonwealth has lived with ever since. What was your position as to the request by Rota and Tinian representatives for a bicameral legislature?
- Pangelinan: I was in total disagreement with that move.
- Willens: So you were in disagreement?
- Pangelinan: Yes.

- Willens: But you needed the votes of Rota and Tinian.
- Pangelinan: Yes, we needed the votes for Rota and Tinian.
- Willens: Did you try to talk them out of it?
- Pangelinan: I guess I was the last one to finally give in, because I knew what will happen, the so-called bicameral situation. I knew it's going to be a problem.
- Willens: Who do you regard now as having been the leader of that point of view? Is that Ben Manglona?
- Pangelinan: Yes, it was Ben Manglona.
- Willens: Was anyone from Tinian an active leader as well?
- Pangelinan: No. Tinian, didn't care whether it's a single or bicameral. They were getting what they want, because at that time the Tinian mayor is a Popular Party mayor and they're getting all kinds of assistance from Saipan. Rota is an entirely different situation. They used to be under the TT, when we were under the Navy.
- Willens: Do you think that historical fact has influenced attitudes to this day?
- Pangelinan: I believe so.
- Willens: Is there any way that the Commonwealth can deal with that problem, in your judgment, to improve the situation?
- Pangelinan: I don't know what the Democratic Party was able to accomplish; what we're supposed to accomplish. Unfortunately, taking a look at the Commonwealth history, we took the Legislature on several occasions, we were able to get everything out, budget, appropriations. This is the first time where it's a Republican-controlled Legislature, both houses, and a Republican Administration, and they weren't able to get a budget passed.
- Willens: You're saying that there's been a time when the Democratic Party has controlled the Legislature, and the Republican Party has controlled the Executive Branch, but there has been an ability to get things done.
- Pangelinan: That's correct.
- Willens: And that's been lost in the last four years.
- Pangelinan: That's correct.
- Willens: And that's one of the issues in the current political campaign. So is it your conclusion that the bicameral nature of the Legislature and the role of Rota and Tinian is not necessarily an obstacle for getting things done?
- Pangelinan: That's correct.
- Willens: Let's go back into history just briefly. After the Covenant was signed, there was an active political education campaign and political campaign. Did you play a role in generating support for the Covenant?
- Pangelinan: Yes.
- Willens: Was there active opposition to the Covenant, and where did it come from?
- Pangelinan: Yes. The so-called Territorial Party. Oscar Rasa was the leader, and Oscar was almost totally being backed by the Carolinians.
- Willens: So the Carolinians you think were opposed in very substantial respects?

- Pangelinan: That's correct.
- Willens: Felix Rabauliman, as I recall, did have reservations about the Covenant. What do you think motivated the Carolinian opposition?
- Pangelinan: If I recall it, Rota and Tinian believed that we are giving them a special treatment, a so-called bicameral legislature. The Carolinians were also saying that they owned Saipan, they were here in the Marianas earlier than the Chamorros so they should be given special treatment. We didn't want to do that, because we were all on the same island. We never discriminated against the Carolinians here, business-wise, education-wise, or anything else. So, their needs or their concerns can be accomplished at a later date when the constitution is ratified or the constitutional convention comes up with various articles, and that's where the Carolinians can come in, submit their requests, what they want, and it can be done in the Constitution. But they didn't believe that. Instead they went all out and campaigned against the Covenant.
- Willens: Do you think that Commissioner Canham did a good job in performing his responsibilities?
- Pangelinan: I believe so.
- Willens: Did you have much dealing with him on a personal level?
- Pangelinan: The only dealing I've had with him was when he was Resident Commissioner. I was very active in the party, and I was working very closely with Canham. Ada at that time was still strong. We still brand him as a Territorial Party person.
- Willens: Who?
- Pangelinan: Frank Ada. So when Canham came in, there was a transition, almost like a transition government, and there's going to be an election, election will come up, and the plebiscite is coming up, so I dealt a great deal with Canham concerning the appointment of members of the Board of Elections to make it impartial, having nine members, four should be appointed by each respective party and that ninth member will be appointed by the eight people.
- Willens: This was to establish a Board of Elections for the first election in November 1977?
- Pangelinan: That's right.
- Willens: Did you like and respect Canham?
- Pangelinan: Yes. He's a very community-oriented individual. He listens to our concerns, all our presentations to him before the election, he analyzes it, he calls us, we communicate, and I believe we got things done, the translation of the Covenant, for example. We had a very good working relationship with Mr. Canham.
- Willens: I remember one occasion where we went together to the United Nations to present statements in defense of separate negotiations. How many times have you appeared before the United Nations?
- Pangelinan: I guess only once when I presented a statement to them. That was it.
- Willens: Did you play any role in testifying before Congress with respect to the approval of the Covenant?
- Pangelinan: No.
- Willens: Did you have any involvement in the Constitutional Convention and the election that preceded it?

- Pangelinan: Only as a party member.
- Willens: And I understand that the Popular Party had done very well in elections shortly in I guess 1975 and Municipal Councils in 1976 but that the Territorial Party won the substantial majority of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention.
- Pangelinan: That's right.
- Willens: What were the factors that led to that result?
- Pangelinan: I think it all started in 1976 when the Popular Party was so busy with the political status and all those things. I guess we just ran out of steam politically. We believed that what we have accomplished as far as Covenant is a major, an historical thing. We just didn't care who's going to win the election.
- Willens: Did you think it was less important to be a delegate to the Constitutional Convention than it was to be elected to the next District Legislature? There were elections for the District Legislature in November 1976 which was actually during the Constitutional Convention, so most people had to make a choice whether to run for the Constitutional Convention or run for the Legislature. Do you recall a debate within the party as to which was most important?
- Pangelinan: We thought the most important was the District Legislature, because they'll have a final say so to approve or disapprove the product. As far as the Constitutional Convention, the Constitutional Convention delegates cannot go contrary to the Covenant, so they have to work closely within the Covenant sections, the sections of the Covenant. So whatever they do, they cannot actually damage what we have produced.
- Willens: So it was your idea that there were not really too many major issues that the Constitutional Convention would have to deal with.
- Pangelinan: That's right.
- Willens: Now Dr. Camacho was elected a delegate to the Convention, and he and other members of the Popular Party played as active a role as they could, given the fact that they were a minority. As the Constitutional Convention progressed, did you change your mind on that subject and come to believe that there were some issues of importance that were being discussed within the Convention?
- Pangelinan: No. We thought all along that we'll take a look at it and everything here is subject to change if we want to. So whatever the delegates did at that time, as we looked at it, there's nothing damaging long-term wise, and there's always going to be [the possibility of] an additional amendment later on down the road.
- Willens: Do you remember any debate then about Article 12 and land alienation?
- Pangelinan: There's not much debate on that because the Covenant already indicated the alienation of land should stay with the Northern Marianas descendants. So like I said, they cannot circumvent around what we have already put in the Covenant. That's why the Article 12 is practically a mirror image of the Covenant. So there just wasn't much debate. Just create a Constitution.
- Willens: Well, then after the Constitution was finally approved, there came a time then for the election that you made reference to earlier in November 1977. I understand that the primary in the Popular Party produced a slate of Dr. Camacho and Oly Borja. And the Territorial Party produced a slate of Joeten and Frank Ada. And then the Lt. Governors switched parties.

- Pangelinan: No, that's not true. No. During the primary of the Democratic Party, Oly became a member of the Democrats, and Carlos, and there was some other person, Juan Sablan, so the three of them ran.
- Willens: For?
- Pangelinan: Under the Democratic Party primary.
- Willens: To become the nominee for Governor?
- Pangelinan: For Governor.
- Willens: And Dr. Camacho won.
- Pangelinan: Then later on, Oly Borja was not happy, was not happy with the outcome. He wants to be the candidate, so he decided to skip the party.
- Willens: So he left the Popular Party?
- Pangelinan: He left the Popular Party and went to the Republican Party.
- Willens: To the Republican Party. Now did they have a similar kind of primary?
- Pangelinan: No. It was hand-picked. It was decided it's going to be Joeten, and they look at everything else, and they finally picked Oly Borja.
- Willens: Well, how did Frank Ada then get designated to be the Lt. Governor candidate?
- Pangelinan: Frank Ada we picked out of the air. He was a District Administrator.
- Willens: But you also said that he was known to be a Territorial Party person.
- Pangelinan: Right. But we decided that the most knowledgeable person from the TT government and from Saipan is Frank Ada. And we've got nothing to lose. Oly was jumping the fence going to the Republican Party, so why not treat them the same way, and pick one of their Republican Party members to come over. But pick a more knowledgeable person that can help during the transition, TT to Commonwealth government. So we were finally able to contact Frank Ada to see if he's interested.
- Willens: Was he?
- Pangelinan: Yes.
- Willens: Were you personally involved as part of the group?
- Pangelinan: Part of the group, yes. So he decided yes, so we locked that in. But Frank Ada was not the person that was actually chosen to run as a Lt. Governor. It was Pete A. Tenorio who was supposed to run with Camacho.
- Willens: What happened?
- Pangelinan: I guess Joeten talked to Pete, and Pete jumped. Before that, he accepted the [Popular] Party nomination, we had a big gathering, we had a big meeting, and Pete A. accepted the nomination to become a running mate. Then we waited on our campaign, Pete A. didn't show up. Just to find out that he was campaigning for the other side. In another campaign. Without saying anything. Not even a thank you for this and that. I found out the next evening that he was campaigning in one of the villages. So I guess he slapped us. So that's how we ended up with Frank.
- Willens: What were the principal issues in that first election for Commonwealth officers?

- Pangelinan: Well, the major issue was transitioning from TT to our own so-called self-government. And I guess Dr. Camacho was very popular at that time, being a physician. He sees a lot of patients at the hospital. He was well liked at that time. That's how politics play. You try and get the right person to run.
- Willens: At the right time?
- Pangelinan: At the right time.
- Willens: So you had a successful slate.
- Pangelinan: That's right.
- Willens: Some of the newspaper reports indicate that the other slate of Tenorio and Borja was viewed as the favorite throughout most of the campaign.
- Pangelinan: Yes, money-wise.
- Willens: Money-wise, they had more funds, so support that came in?
- Pangelinan: That's right. They have lots of money. Both are businessmen. Both own their own businesses. And Joeten had already established himself with other businessmen and the business community here on the island. Being a president of the Chamber of Commerce at one time, he's got a lot of influence with the business community.
- Willens: How did the Popular Party respond to that kind of disadvantage?
- Pangelinan: Well, the people here are always suspicious of big businessmen, and they knew Joeten. Joeten is practically monopolizing the retail wholesale outlet here on the island. So even though Joeten had a lot of money and has got a lot of influence in the business community, we thought all along that with our own small funds, the money that we have, the middle-class people are backing us. We thought that we can win this without much money. I guess we did.
- Willens: Did you use the sentiment against the wealthy businessmen?
- Pangelinan: Anti-business, yes, that's right. Yes. They have no room in government to provide public services, especially when they own a big business. They only look at their own pocket. It was one of the political strategies. We had to do all that and try to win with not much money in our account.
- Willens: After your ticket was elected, did you consider taking a position in the government yourself?
- Pangelinan: Not really. I opened myself up. I told them that if they need me for anything, I'm available. I was still with Peace Corps at that time. I have a good job.
- Willens: The Peace Corps was still in effect in 1978?
- Pangelinan: Yes, it gradually closed down. But I had a good job with the Peace Corps. I was the Associate Director for Management.
- Willens: When did you leave the Peace Corps?
- Pangelinan: I finally left in 1977. They were ready to phase out, so it was time to move on. But in 1977, I was really going to run as a legislator, but then I decided that I will help Carlos, then I was nominated to become chairman of the Democratic Party.
- Willens: Did you assume that position?

Pangelinan: Yes. I got stuck as a chairman for I guess two years, a two-year term. So I served as a chairman, but then afterwards Carlos decided that he needs me, he needs an administrative person.

Willens: Did you go in and do that?

Pangelinan: Yes. I became the Special Assistant for Administration and Finance.

Willens: Can you give me your sense of what were the strengths and weaknesses of that first Administration? They were faced with a broad range of problems in terms of the transition, and to implement a new Constitution under a new kind of relationship with the United States. How do you think the new Administration handled that assignment?

Pangelinan: I believe the new Administration did pretty well, knowing that we're only getting limited funds in the beginning. Like I said, there were the tremendous problems we have inherited from the Trust Territory.

Willens: What kind of problems are you referring to?

Pangelinan: The transition. We still hadn't completed the total inventory of who owns what. The assets of the Trust Territory, that were supposed to go to all the districts, were to be divided up and [then they would determine] what's going to stay here in the Marianas. That was never really completed by our so-called transition group. I guess Eddie and Mr. Canham at that time were handling that. So even when we went in, we were still dealing with all those problems, plus developing new programs, policies, for Marianas.

Willens: How about capital improvements and infrastructure? What that an important concern for the new administration?

Pangelinan: Yes. Programs and policies we have to develop everything from the beginning.

Willens: Well, there had been a lot of preparatory work done by consultants and others during the preceding two years. Is it your recollection that very little of that work proved to be useful or politically acceptable?

Pangelinan: Politically, probably they're acceptable, but implementing it was very difficult based on the amount of money we were able to generate and what we can get out of the United States. It wasn't that much. At the same time, because all those programs that were developed by the consultants at that period, we had to change again. Having a new Legislature, they have an entirely different vision, different plan, different pet projects they want done here in the Marianas.

Willens: Who controlled the Legislature?

Pangelinan: It was the Republicans. First Legislature, it was Oscar Rasa; Oscar was the speaker. So you can call it a gridlock; there was a gridlock during the first two years with Oscar controlling the House. I believe the Senate was Larry, Larry Guerrero, the Governor now.

Willens: What is your recollection about relations with the United States in the first years of the Commonwealth, and specifically with respect to interpreting the Covenant? Were there any problems with respect to the Covenant that you remember developing in the first few years of Commonwealth?

Pangelinan: I really cannot recall any major problem.

Willens: The Commonwealth has now been in effect for some 15 years. You were a member of the Commission and instrumental in developing this new relationship. Trying to

put everything into historical perspective, what is your assessment of how well the Commonwealth relationship with the United States has worked out?

Pangelinan: I think it's satisfactory. I can safely say that I'm satisfied.

Willens: Were there particular disappointments that you had, and are there some accomplishments that you're particularly proud of?

Pangelinan: The whole package in itself, I'm pretty proud of that particular accomplishment. Other than that, there are little things that you encounter daily here that can be resolved. Some of those problems are not made by the United States but by our own leaders here. You can call it negligence on our part.

Willens: Do you think problems like alien labor, immigration, tax rebate and all these issues that are being debated in the campaigns are capable of being solved?

Pangelinan: Yes, because there have been warnings in the past. There's nothing new. When Froilan [Tenorio] was the Resident Representative, I worked for him. I was his, almost like a resident manager here. And we presented all those concerns to the Administration. Froilan did. You guys better do this, do that, or else. So there were warnings; there were signs that you have to do this. But we continued to ignore it, ignore, ignore, until they finally caught us, to a point where either we do it fast or we do it their way, the U.S. Congress way. But these are all issues that could have been resolved.

Willens: And will be resolved.

Pangelinan: Eventually, especially if we win. We are the problem-solvers. I always believed that the Democratic Party is a problem-solver. We always come in whenever there's a major problem and try to solve it.

Willens: Well, we have reached the end of our questions and on that political note, we will finish this interview. Mr. Pangelinan has a series of commitments this evening, and he has been very generous with his time. Thank you, Mitch, and maybe we'll be able to talk again.