

## INTERVIEW OF DAVID M. SABLAN

by Howard P. Willens

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- Willens: David M. Sablan has a distinguished career in private business and government in the Northern Mariana Islands. I want to thank you, David, for making the time available to me. I'd like to begin the interview by asking you some of the basics. When were you born, and where were you born?
- Sablan: I was born on April 2, 1932, the day after all the fools were born, and I was born here on Saipan.
- Willens: And who were your parents?
- Sablan: My father was Elias P. Sablan and my mother was Carmen M. Sablan.
- Willens: I remember hearing early on, David, that you were a U.S. citizen before commonwealth. What were the circumstances of your becoming a U.S. citizen?
- Sablan: Right. In 1947, I left Saipan to get an education. So I went to Guam at the age of 14 to be trained to become a teacher in Saipan. Of course, that plan changed, and so instead of furthering my education in the United States (I really wanted to become a lawyer, but I didn't have sufficient funding in those days) I completed George Washington High School after four years. I got a job in Guam and married my first wife who comes from Guam. I remained there for 18 years and, during my stay there, I became a U.S. citizen.
- Willens: So you were in Guam until what year?
- Sablan: From 1952 to 1965, January.
- Willens: I have read a good deal about your father, David, and his role in the post-World War II years here on Saipan. Did you have the opportunity to share some of those experiences with your father in the late 1940s and the 1950s?
- Sablan: Oh, yes. I was old enough to remember the war and post-war after the invasion of Saipan. I was very close to my father. Even when I was in Guam, I came back quite frequently so, yes, I enjoyed the presence of my dad and my mother.
- Willens: He was the first mayor of Saipan following World War II, is that correct?
- Sablan: To a certain extent, yes. The first one was really Gregorio Sablan. Gregorio Sablan was the first mayor elected in 1944, appointed, excuse me, by the commanding officer of Civil Affairs.
- Willens: Was he a relative of yours?
- Sablan: My father's relative, yes. My uncle. His son later became a mayor as well, Ben Sablan. His other family members are still around here. Uncle Greg died sometime in January of 1945. And immediately thereafter, my father was sworn in by Civil Affairs. Later, we know them as military government. He held the mayor's position for about 11 years, until 1957.
- Willens: Did there come a time when he was elected to that position by the residents of Saipan?

- Sablan: Yes. After the fourth year, I think it was, it was no longer by appointment. It was an elected position, and that's exactly how he got out of office. He lost the election to Judge Ignacio Benavente in 1954.
- Willens: Is it true that he lost by just a single vote?
- Sablan: Very close. As a matter of fact there was a huge uproar among the Carolinian women, because the Carolinian women were not satisfied with the counting of the votes, and they marched up to a fellow named Brown. Frank Brown was sort of the economic advisor in the old days for the government, and it was alleged that Brown influenced the vote and that's how dad lost the election.
- Willens: I've seen references to the fact that your father was one of the founders of the predecessor to the Territorial Party, which I think was called the Progressive Party. How did it come to be that he formed a party and was viewed as a representative then of the Carolinian community?
- Sablan: We're part Carolinian. My father is half Carolinian, half Saipanese or Spanish. During his term as mayor in the late 1940s he formed a party called the Progressive Party, essentially to counteract the talk about integrating with Guam.
- Willens: Are you relating this now back to the 1940s, or is it more accurate to put it in the 1950s?
- Sablan: In the 1940s. This was the genesis of the party system here.
- Willens: I heard he did oppose the reunification effort.
- Sablan: Very, very actively opposed. Even to the point where I, living in Guam at that time, was not really looked on favorably by the Guamanians.
- Willens: Did you take a different view politically at that time?
- Sablan: No, no, I took the exactly the same view as my dad in that we wanted a direct annexation with the United States.
- Willens: Was that basically the position then of the Progressive Party?
- Sablan: That is correct.
- Willens: And was he well regarded in the Carolinian community in part because he was one-half Carolinian?
- Sablan: Yes, he was the high chief among the Carolinians.
- Willens: He was the high chief?
- Sablan: The high chief. He was actually referred to as the Chief. And not the mayor.
- Willens: Was there much ethnic concern in those years, the 1940s and the 1950s, as between the Carolinian community on the one hand and the Chomorro community on the other?
- Sablan: Well, the Carolinians considered themselves the minority. I guess they are still considered minority because of their population, but the Carolinians sort of latched on to dad because of his position in the community and sort of confided in his judgment. And one of the things that is quite apparent was the placement of the Carolinians near the ocean because they were fishermen. This was the decision made by my dad.
- Willens: What decision was made by your father?

- Sablan: To put the Carolinians on the oceanside, and of course, you know from the standpoint of our economy, oceanside properties are very expensive.
- Willens: Which villages particularly were Carolinian?
- Sablan: Chalan Kanoa, District No. 4 and Tanapag.
- Willens: Tanapag.
- Sablan: Tanapag. But, yes, they looked to my dad as sort of the high chief of the Carolinian and the Chamorros accepted that as well.
- Willens: Who succeeded your father in that capacity as chief in the Carolinian community?
- Sablan: Well, after my father died in late 1968, technically the succession is the son of his oldest sister. And that brings it down to the Villagomez family. Manny and John. John is still alive but is invalid. So M.S. Villagomez, you know one of the richest guys here, is technically the chief of the clan.
- Willens: Is he still alive?
- Sablan: Yes.
- Willens: I have never heard that before.
- Sablan: We don't go out and advertise it.
- Willens: I understand. During the years then that you were on Guam, which I understand was until 1965, did you formulate any views about a future political status for the Marianas?
- Sablan: Well, we wanted to be directly annexed to the United States. We felt that we were the underdog between ourselves and Guam. Because Guam was sort of senior as far as being in the U.S. political arena, we felt that we would have always be the underdog if we united with Guam. In other words, we would become subordinated to Guam. Number one, we felt that it was impractical because population wise, there were more of them. They were more accustomed to the American way of life, whereas we're brand new to the political family. We have never seen the Americans before until after the war and everything was working against us if we were to become associated with Guam. That's why my dad felt that we wanted the recognition from the United States. This feeling prevailed in the late 1940s and all the way into the 1960s until the finalization of our Covenant.
- Willens: On the other hand, the Popular Party developed with a different view in favor of reunification with Guam. How did the Popular Party leaders respond to the concerns of the Progressive Party that reunification would result in domination of the Northern Marianas by the Guamanians?
- Sablan: Well the Popular Party, which are now the Democrats, was totally in reverse of what the other party believed. They did not foresee. We had a similar ultimate goal to become U.S. citizens. But their idea was to join up with Guam by way of reintegration. I really don't know why they used the word "reintegration" in that we were never integrated before. I mean, ancestrally speaking you know, some of us started from Guam, but when we moved up here, we were never under one government per se. And therefore I cannot agree to this terminology, reintegration. The Popular Party, led by our mutual friend Ben Santos, was totally against direct annexation with the United States and wanted to form some sort of a political relationship with Guam.
- Willens: What kind of a work did you do in Guam, David, up until your return to Saipan in 1965?

- Sablan: Well, my first visit to Guam was as an alien. And I had difficult time finding a job after graduating from high school. I had the help of one Russell Steven, who was one of the intelligence officers during the war here, who later became the Attorney General of Guam. He helped my dad, Mayor Sablan, find me a job, and so I got a job in 1952 with Atkins, Kroll & Company.
- Willens: What kind of company was that?
- Sablan: It was a trading company. It's one of the oldest American companies that was established in Guam. It was established in 1914, and they did trading business. They did bartering. They brought down rice, sugar, corn beef, coffee and traded copra with them. And they took the copra and sold it in the world market. My first job at the company was working in the steamship department.
- Willens: For how many years did you work with them?
- Sablan: Eleven years. And from steamship, I moved up to the automotive section and later became the sales manager for the General Motors dealership for them.
- Willens: Had you studied any business administration during your formal education?
- Sablan: Not at all.
- Willens: So you are essentially a self-taught businessman?
- Sablan: Yes, by experience.
- Willens: That's supposed to be the best school.
- Sablan: Then later I saw that there was no more challenge in the car business, so I took a dip in salary and worked for the Bank of Hawaii.
- Willens: Based in Guam?
- Sablan: Based in Guam. A year after Bank of Hawaii moved in, I applied and got a job there and worked for the bank as the assistant manager of the branch there for about four years until I moved up here.
- Willens: While you were in Guam, did you become aware to any extent of a new policy of the United States government with respect to the Trust Territory that was articulated by the Kennedy Administration?
- Sablan: I was not too deeply involved in politics in those days. Number one, because I was rather young and was struggling with my job. But through the frequent visits of my dad to the Commander of the Naval Forces Marianas, I got a bit of exposure. But as to the Kennedy Administration's decisions regarding the Trust Territory I was not really aware of that.
- Willens: You've heard of the so-called Solomon Commission Report?
- Sablan: I've heard of Solomon. I've never seen the report. I've heard so much about it. Some good, some bad.
- Willens: What essentially was the perception of the Solomon Commission and Report as you recall?
- Sablan: I'm trying to recollect exactly what was related to me—that it was very critical of the administration of the Trust Territory. And some of the people took it very hard and some people just took it passably.
- Willens: You're talking about people within the Trust Territory government.

- Sablan: Within the Trust Territory government, right.
- Willens: Was that critical assessment generally shared by your father and other political leaders in the Marianas?
- Sablan: It was not really. No. My dad was, I guess, one of the few that were quite aware of what was going on with the Solomon Report, although he did not share with me. I was too young to even ask.
- Willens: But with respect to the criticism of Trust Territory personnel and policies in the Northern Marianas, was that something that was generally agreed with by the local residents?
- Sablan: Yes.
- Willens: What were the principal deficiencies of the Trust Territory Administration as you understood it in the 1960s?
- Sablan: Well, other than the general statement that it was critical, I was not really aware as to articulation of what the specifics were, other than the fact it was administered quite sloppily and that they're not doing the administration as per expected. Now, I have my own observations on the performance of the Trust Territory government back then.
- Willens: Yes, that's what I would really like to hear.
- Sablan: The approach of the administering authority in governing these various areas was a hands-off approach. I think that the administering authority had taken the position that they should let the people grow politically, economically, and educationally at their own pace. They did not want to be branded by the Communists as influencing the thoughts of the people of the Trust Territory, all these various islands in Micronesia, including the CNMI. That, in my opinion, was some good and some bad. We needed the help and yet we could not get it because the United States took the position that it didn't want to use its influence in getting these people to where they wanted to get to.
- Willens: Well, the change in United States policy that I referred to earlier was designed to change that direction and to put aside those old policies. Through increased funding and new educational programs the new effort was to assist the Micronesians throughout the Trust Territory to prepare themselves for self-government more rapidly. Do you think those policies, including the increased funding, had that kind of impact?
- Sablan: Yes, it did. I think that the turning point really was towards the end of the 1960s, when the budget for the Trust Territory went from \$5 million to as high as \$75 million towards the end of the Trusteeship. And that at least helped us in developing our educational system. Helped our infrastructure. And helped more rehabilitation of the damages of the war. So to that extent I think it was good and it was welcomed. But the status quo approach that they had up to the late 1950s was not working.
- Willens: Do you have any recollections of the activities of the Peace Corps in the Marianas?
- Sablan: Yes.
- Willens: What is your recollection and assessment of their performance?
- Sablan: Well, the Peace Corps presence here was construed as enhancing our educational system and enabling us to know more about what the United States is all about. To know more about what the economy is, the development and modernizing of our business thoughts. Generally speaking, I sort of endorsed the Peace Corps when they were here. They helped

us a lot infusing modern technology and business.

Willens: I've seen it said in some documents that the Peace Corps were more effective in other districts than in the Marianas because of the increased sophistication and Americanization of the Marianas. Do you have any reaction to that suggestion?

Sablan: Well, sure. I think historically the administration of the Northern Marianas under the military government greatly advanced us over the other areas. Obviously, the military use and receive a lot more money. When my dad was the mayor, all he had to do was to go down to Commander of Naval Forces Marianas and say we need so much money to improve the dock in Tinian, and he got it. As opposed to the funding priorities of other territories within the Trust Territory. So they needed a lot more development than we did. I think the Peace Corps program was more valuable in those areas.

Willens: When you came to Saipan in 1965, what employment did you undertake at that point?

Sablan: I was rehired by Atkins, Kroll & Company to come to Saipan to open up an office for them to administer the copra contract, to administer the workmen's compensation insurance facilities that we had provided the Trust Territory government throughout the whole of Micronesia. And that was a job. What prompted the opening of this office was basically those two contracts that we had with the Trust Territory. In addition, after the typhoon that hit Guam in 1962, the companies in Guam became so busy in the rehabilitation of Guam and they were not able to provide the services in trading throughout Micronesia. So the Saipan office was given the responsibility to provide the necessary trading services that we had with people in the Marshalls, Ponape and so forth. The office was established for that purpose.

Willens: Was that transfer of responsibility associated with the movement of the capital of the Trust Territory headquarters from Guam to Saipan?

Sablan: To Saipan, yes. When they moved up here, we saw the need to move up here and be with the Trust Territory government. We did not impose on them for any housing or any transportation; we went very independently. But that was the philosophy of Mr. Kroll. Although we had a contract and we were entitled to housing and cars and other government transportation, we just did not take it and we independently grew on our own accord.

Willens: How long did you remain with the company?

Sablan: After I opened the company in 1965, I lasted until 1979, and then I went to work for the government, for the legislature as a special consultant for economic development. In 1982, I joined the Tenorio Administration. So from 1979 to 1982, just briefly, I came back from Atkins Kroll, Microl Corporation.

Willens: Is Microl Corporation the successor of Atkins Kroll?

Sablan: Of Atkins Kroll, yes. When the Congress of Micronesia was formed, I felt it was necessary to localize the corporation and got the permission from Atkins Kroll & Company to incorporate in the Trust Territory.

Willens: Trying to think back now 28 years to when you returned to Saipan, can you help me sort of describe what this island looked like? As I understand it, the Royal Taga Hotel had not yet been built.

Sablan: In 1965, the Royal Taga was just opened. In 1965, my father had a four-unit motel.

Willens: A four-unit motel?

- Sablan: Yes. On the beach. And he got the money from the Economic Development Loan Fund.
- Willens: Was that the only facility available to visiting persons?
- Sablan: That was it.
- Willens: I understood that there were some old Quonset huts on Capitol Hill that had been used by the military that were from time to time made available for visitors.
- Sablan: Mostly at Navy Hill. Navy Hill, yes. The government, the Navy actually, built and sort of remodeled these Quonsets. And they were sort of the guest houses for people that came who are not eligible to live at Capitol Hill.
- Willens: Was the opening up of the island in the early 1960s an important step in your judgment?
- Sablan: Very, very important.
- Willens: How so?
- Sablan: Up to that time our economy relied totally on government spending and it was very restrictive to that extent. As you are probably aware in the old days, up to 1962, no one can come up here unless they got a Navy clearance, which took months to obtain. Because of the activities that went on in the northern tip of the island, this was designed to restrict the influx of people until they moved out in 1962 and we became civilian-ruled.
- Willens: How about the access of the island to foreign investment?
- Sablan: Under the most favored nation clause of the administering authority, only Americans may invest up to a point. In other words, there was a turning point in the early 1970s, and before then, it was all U.S. only.
- Willens: What businesses were on the island in 1965 that you can recall?
- Sablan: Well, only ourselves.
- Willens: Was Joeten in business?
- Sablan: Joeten, Manny Villagomez.
- Willens: What kind of businesses did each of them have at the time?
- Sablan: General merchandise, steamship, stevedoring. Manny Villagomez was general merchandise primarily. They had different stores and that was pretty much the extent.
- Willens: How about the Borja business interest?
- Sablan: Oly later set up that business after the 1970s, when the U.S. policy under Rogers Morton changed that most favored nation clause. To allow other friendly nations to come in. Can I elaborate on that?
- Willens: Yes.
- Sablan: In 1968 I was seeking to be in business, and there was a guy named Harrison Loesch. He was a deputy interior secretary of some sort. Anyway he came out here and he made a big speech about the fact that he found \$2.3 million in an economic development loan fund that was never loaned out. Therefore people ought to try to borrow that money to develop themselves. So there was Elfried Cradbock, I don't know if you've ever heard the name, Elfried Cradbock.

- Willens: How do you spell the last name?
- Sablan: C-R-A-D-B-O-C-K. She came to my office at Microl and said, by the way I understand that you are one of the foremost in business here—a young, driving, aggressive young man. I'd like to talk to you about getting into the hotel business.
- Willens: Did she work for Mr. Loesch at Interior?
- Sablan: No. Her husband was the deputy chief of the Trust Territory's Community Development Office. She was a teacher here. She started out in Palau and later moved up in the Trust Territory headquarters office.
- Willens: Did you meet Mr. Loesch on this occasion?
- Sablan: I never had the pleasure of meeting him, although I listened to him speak. Anyway that prompted Elfried Cradbock to find ways in which to assist in the development of something here. So she came to me and said we want to know if you'd be interested in setting up a hotel project. I said well, you know I'm tied up in this business, I don't know how I could help. Anyway to make things short, I established a corporation in 1968 to venture into the hotel business. I hired Ed Crain from Guam to be my attorney; I hired McKinley, Whitaker and Associates to be my architect to design a 50-room hotel. We can borrow the money, use that money to build this hotel only to be told that 50 rooms is not enough. We got to go to 200 rooms.
- Willens: Who said that?
- Sablan: Attorney Crain from Guam. He was the attorney for some hotel developments in Guam and therefore he was advising me that you should go 200 because you cannot make it pay at 50 rooms. And I said well you know this is more than I can chew and therefore I'm somewhat leery. And he says no, go for it. So I did. So I thought the best way to approach this whole situation was to go to Pan American because as they fly they needed a place to put their people. So I went and talked to the Pan Am people and they directed me to a Eddie Trippe—Edward Trippe—the son of the founder of Pan American who was a vice president of Intercontinental Hotels Corporation. I asked him if I could solicit his help. So I went all over the world looking for money. Nobody knew where Saipan was; nobody's interested, Trusteeship island, you can't own land, forget it. So anyway just about that time Continental and Pan Am were vying for the route.
- Willens: For the what?
- Sablan: For the Micronesia route.
- Willens: I see. So this was before Continental Airlines acquired the right to service the Trust Territory?
- Sablan: Right. This is in 1968, remember. So anyway to make things short, it became necessary to get the Japanese to invest in our hotel because Keio Plaza Hotel in Japan is Intercontinental-managed.
- Willens: Keio Plaza?
- Sablan: Keio, K-E-I-O, Plaza is an Intercontinental franchise hotel.
- Willens: I see.
- Sablan: Very interested in investing.
- Willens: Were you aware of any Japanese interests in Saipan before that time?
- Sablan: No. I didn't see the need for it, because under the most favored nation clause only

Americans can invest. Yet Ed Trippe came back to me and says we got to keep looking. First of all, we went to OPIC and we couldn't get them to budge. I went to PICA, which is Private Investment Corporation of America overseas, and we can't get them to come in. So we finally go to the Japan Travel Bureau. The Travel Bureau says if Pan Am would go in or Intercontinental, we'll invest 25 percent and Keio Plaza is willing to kick in 24. Intercontinental was willing to do that provided these two people came in. We were, although, individually we had a substantial sum of stock. We owned actually 11 percent of the total stock of the corporation.

Willens: Who was we?

Sablan: Elfried Cradbock and myself.

Willens: I see.

Sablan: Yes.

Willens: Well, could the Japanese invest in this consistent with the most favored nation provision?

Sablan: No, until Elfried and I one night sat in my office and we wrote 300 letters to Members of Congress in the United States. Not too many people know this. And because she came from Michigan we wrote to the Michigan representatives and got the support of the U.S. Congress. And in 1974 lo and behold Rogers Morton declared that other friendly nations to the United States may invest here.

Willens: So you worked six years in trying to put that venture together?

Sablan: Yes. So finally in 1974 we broke ground. We restructured the corporation, increased the capitalization, we own 11 percent jointly, Elfried and me, and the other was owned by the outsiders. We reserved 20 percent for local participation from which we sold maybe about a percent.

Willens: That hotel became the Intercontinental Hotel on Saipan?

Sablan: Hotel Intercontinental in Saipan and I was the president.

Willens: By that time, was there not also another major hotel had been constructed?

Sablan: Continental Hotel.

Willens: And what was the background of that hotel?

Sablan: After Ed Johnston, the High Commissioner, took office here, Continental by then I think was already awarded the route. And so they felt it was safe to build a 200-room hotel as well, so they built right next to us.

Willens: As I recall they were up and operational before the Intercontinental was?

Sablan: Right. This is primarily because the overrun then had to be satisfied. The cost overrun.

Willens: By whom?

Sablan: By the Intercontinental Group. My group. So we finally went back to the stockholders and said you know we got to kick in more money. They all agreed.

Willens: You were free then to engage in these other business ventures even though you were working for Microl Corp.?

Sablan: I was the vice president of Microl and I got the permission of the owners to go in and do it because it did not conflict with the job I had.

- Willens: What was the state of the transportation and communications services in the late 1960s and early 1970s?
- Sablan: The Trust Territory government contracted with Pan American to operate DC4 and DC6s and some sea planes. And that's how we did transportation. The competition between Continental and Pan American was essentially to introduce 727s. So it was not until mid-1970 that we knew that Continental got the contract and they started flying jets. But before then it was DC4 and DC6.
- Willens: There was major lawsuit involving the Continental Hotel on Micro Beach. Do you have any recollections of that dispute?
- Sablan: Not really, I don't recall.
- Willens: There was also a major dispute as to which airline should be awarded the route between Saipan and Japan, and I have read some newspaper releases indicating that you and many others took active positions on that issue. Can you recall, generally, the nature of that difference of opinion?
- Sablan: Sure. As you know, the Congress of Micronesia met here since 1966, so both airlines were actively trying to gain favor from the leaders of Micronesia; they were all here doing their own little lobbying to gain favors. Air Micronesia was sort of the feeder line for Continental Airlines. The counterpart of Air Micronesia was a company that never got off the ground called MAP—Micronesia Air Pacific—that was going to be the feeder line and I was going to be the president of that.
- Willens: What was it going to do in relation to Continental?
- Sablan: It was going to sort of duplicate what Air Micronesia is presently doing. A feeder line. In other words go through Micronesia, bring the passengers up to Guam and/or Saipan, and Pan Am would come in from Honolulu, Saipan or Guam, Japan and off to Southeast Asia. But that never materialized because Continental won the route. But it was very active; people were all either on the side of Pan Am or on the side of Continental.
- Willens: Who did you favor?
- Sablan: Pan American. Because I was going to be the president of the feeder line.
- Willens: I see. In the late 1960s, the Congress of Micronesia formed a Future Political Status Commission that issued a report in 1969 advocating either free association or independence for all of Micronesia. Did you have any impressions at the time about that particular report?
- Sablan: I know the players. I've never taken the time to read the full report, but I've read the summary.
- Willens: Which members of Congress of Micronesia did you happen to know the best?
- Sablan: Well, obviously our own senator, Oly Borja, and the chairman of the political status commission, Lazarus Salii.
- Willens: How would you characterize Chairman Salii?
- Sablan: Well he was a very, very intelligent man. Very intelligent. He knows his politics very well.
- Willens: Those are two separate points that you're making. That he was both intelligent and he knew his politics.

- Sablan: Well, because I think generally he's intelligent and above all of that he was well-versed in the political field.
- Willens: Do you think that he was committed to Micronesian unity, to try to keep all six districts together?
- Sablan: Definitely yes. That was his aim. To keep the entire Micronesia intact. Although, needless to say, the CNMI took a different view.
- Willens: And how would you evaluate Senator Borja in both your view at that time and with the benefit of hindsight?
- Sablan: I think that Senator Borja was leaning more towards the belief of the party that he represented and that's the Territorial. And that we should depart from Micronesia and have a political relation with the United States on a direct basis.
- Willens: There is some commentary to the effect that the Congress of Micronesia was a very constructive step forward and that it served to help develop some sense of Micronesian unity. Do you have any reaction to that?
- Sablan: Oh, sure. As you are aware, people in Micronesia including the CNMI were never given the opportunity to govern themselves. This is the first time in the history of our people that we have been given the opportunity to govern ourselves, govern our affairs, speak our voices. We think that it was one of the best things that ever happened to this area in the development of our leadership and the initiative that we need to take to lead ourselves.
- Willens: For all the criticism that the United States has taken as administering authority, they often are given credit for helping to develop the machinery of self-government in the Trust Territory.
- Sablan: Well, they well deserve this commendation. I think the creation of the Congress of Micronesia was the best thing that could have happened to us.
- Willens: There was considerable complaint within the Congress, however, that they did not have any meaningful power over the expenditure, for example, of funds that were appropriated by the United States Congress.
- Sablan: That might be okay, but I feel that you have to crawl before you can walk. We really did not mind that. Although later on we were given the opportunity to assist the High Commissioner in coming up with the recommendations on how funds were to be expended.
- Willens: In 1970, the United States presented what was called a commonwealth proposal to the Congress of Micronesia Status Delegation. The delegation rejected it, and the Congress of Micronesia reaffirmed that rejection later that year. That has been singled out by some as one of the key events that forced or persuaded the Marianas leadership that they should pursue a different course of action. Do you have any recollection of those events?
- Sablan: Vaguely. Because I think these were matters that were discussed on the floor of the Congress. I think the reason why the rest of Micronesia wanted to take a different position was because they felt that they need to grow up politically. Again, we've never been our own leaders and I guess it was more fear than anything else.
- Willens: Clarify that for me. More fear on the part of whom?
- Sablan: On the part of the Micronesians to forge ahead and be associated with the United States. They feared that they are going into the unknown. They would much prefer to be

themselves and grow at their own pace rather than merging with the United States and not knowing what sort of marriage it was going to be.

Willens: You think that's why they favored free association rather than a closer relationship?

Sablan: That's right.

Willens: And was that sentiment shared by the leadership in the Marianas or not?

Sablan: The leaders of the Marianas, to some extent they probably shared that. Yes.

Willens: After the commonwealth proposal was rejected by the Congress of Micronesia, the elections here in the Northern Marianas indicated that the voting population supported the leaders in the Marianas from the Popular Party who were in favor of some form of commonwealth. Had the matter become a political issue at that point as between the parties, or were their positions very much the same as you described them earlier?

Sablan: Well, I think, you're talking about what point in time?

Willens: About 1970. This is after Guam in a referendum rejected reunification. There are some who say that was a significant event.

Sablan: That was a very significant event because it was felt that the Guamanians did not like the Saipanese people as a result of the referendum. As you recall, they also had a referendum whether or not they favor the so-called reunification of the Marianas. And when that happened, well, we wanted to become part of Guam and yet the Guamanians did not want to. Therefore this was a significant event and the turning point wherein whether you are Democrat or Popular Party. I got to stick with the rest of the people and this was to go in direct annexation with the United States. That was the turning point.

Willens: How did the Popular Party deal with the fact that their objective of reintegration with Guam had been more or less rejected by the Guamanians?

Sablan: Well, I guess they changed their mind and said well, if the Guamanians don't want it then we don't want them either. Let's go direct and join hands with the opposition party and make the best of our relations with the United States.

Willens: Now during the late 1960s and early 1970s, did you have any political affiliation?

Sablan: None at all. Because I was a U.S. citizen from Guam, and I was looked at as an outsider. As a matter of fact, at one point, this is all history as far as I'm concerned, Ben Santos, the president of the legislature at that time, went on TV and said there's a fellow here from Guam who is against reunification with Guam. We're going to deport him. He's not one of us.

Willens: I see.

Sablan: But he never deported me, I'm still here.

Willens: What was your general assessment of Mr. Santos in those years?

Sablan: Very influential. He was looked at as the leader for the Popular Party, and whatever he said went.

Willens: What was the source of his political influence?

Sablan: Well, I think that he had a guy named Nabors, Bill Nabors, who was legal counsel. Because Bill was an American and making good on his own, he gave a lot of advice to Ben and Ben sort of trusted Nabors. So that contributed to his influence.

Willens: Did you have a high regard Mr. Nabors?

- Sablan: Not really. I had my own opinion about Bill.
- Willens: Why was that?
- Sablan: I found out a little bit about Bill. Bill, you know, started off here as an Assistant Attorney General for the Trust Territory government. He was always in defiance of the High Commissioner and his boss, Robert Shoecraft, who was the Attorney General at that time. He was also black. Bill Nabors was at one time given the opportunity to be the chairman of the club, Topatapi Club, where all of the Americans went. Without clearing with the boss, he was going to have a Las Vegas night, a gambling night, to raise money for the club. The High Commissioner at the last minute sent the Attorney General up there to tell Nabors to stop this. This is illegal. Nabors went out and said well you know this High Commissioner is a gutless wonder. He got fired the following day. He was always in defiance of the decisions and rulings that come from above. For that reason, I guess I say that I didn't have too much regard for Bill.
- Willens: There have been several factors identified as explaining the desire of the Marianas to seek a separate status. You've reacted to one, namely the vote in Guam on the reintegration referendum. It's also been suggested that the people in the Northern Marianas and especially those on Saipan had economic development aspirations that they thought could be fulfilled most effectively through a relationship with the United States. Is that a factor that you think had some significance?
- Sablan: Oh, yes. Definitely so. That was one of the influencing factors in tying up with the United States. There are several other factors involved. Number one, we feel that we are indebted to the United States for their effort during the war to liberate these islands. This is, to me, the foremost reason for going with the United States. This is the way my father looked at the situation. Number two, we recognized that the United States is powerful economically and militarily, and I guess the people here wanted nothing but the best. That's why we aspired and worked towards becoming part of the United States.
- Willens: Other people have pointed out the differences in cultures, languages and histories among the various districts within the Trust Territory and have suggested that those differences could never be accommodated under a single unified Micronesia. What is your reaction to that suggestion?
- Sablan: Yes, I think that is so, because we are far apart. In other words, we come from different islands, different cultures. Although we were all ruled by the Japanese, there was never a common ground by which we say okay, this is our culture, this is our custom that prevailed throughout all of Micronesia. We are a different breed of people here, as compared to the peoples from the Marshalls, and the Eastern and Western Carolines.
- Willens: In that connection it has been suggested that the Marianas, and in particular Saipan, had been very much Americanized and really had less of a local or historical culture to preserve. What's your sense of that?
- Sablan: Yes, particularly among the Chamorros. Carolinians still maintain a certain strong cultural preservation. Chamorros are different. You know we have two sectors here, the Chamorros and the Carolinians. The Chamorro people are basically the Spanish-based and as such we, other than the religious factor, have nothing in common with the Carolinians or the people in the Eastern Carolines. The Carolinians here have certain ties with other islands, but even they do not feel that they are that close to the Carolinians from say Truk or Ponape.

- Willens: One other factor that has been identified relates to actions by the Congress of Micronesia in the 1971-72 period with respect to taxing the tourist industry or allocating revenues generated by the various districts. There was the sense that the Marianas were contributing more than they were receiving. Do you have any recollection of controversy directed at those policies at that point in time?
- Sablan: No, I'm afraid I can't comment too much on that. You mean contributing to the common fund?
- Willens: Well, for example there was, as I recall and I may be off by a year or so, a tax law adopted or proposed within the Congress of Micronesia that would levy taxes on tourist facilities. It was felt here in the Marianas that such a tax was going to act as a deterrent to development of the industry here and was going to provide funds to the Congress of Micronesia emanating from Saipan that would then be divided among the other districts.
- Sablan: Yes, I remember that.
- Willens: What do you remember?
- Sablan: Well, I remember the fact that there was some dissension among the people here in the Northern Marianas that we might be contributing more to the common till for distribution throughout the area without getting our equitable share.
- Willens: Well, there came a time when tempers raged high, and one evening the Congress of Micronesia facilities were burned in February of 1971. Do you have any recollection of that event?
- Sablan: Yes, I remember that very distinctly. I think it was the Senate that was burned down. Basically because, I guess, they tried to pass some tax measures that would heavily tax us and the higher earners opposed to the ones that are in Micronesia. So instead I think we sort of quietly demonstrated by burning down the Senate and all the documents that were there that referred to that law.
- Willens: It doesn't sound as though it's protected constitutional activity. Was the Popular Party behind this so far as you know?
- Sablan: Well, I couldn't say that. I couldn't say that the Popular Party was behind it, although they were very bitter about this whole thing and they were more outspoken because they were the party in power at that time. There was a lot of dissension amongst the people that we are being unduly taxed to sort of subsidize the other territories. And they felt that that was not fair.
- Willens: Why were they the dominant political party at the time?
- Sablan: Why? I guess there were more people following the platform or the preaching of the Popular Party leaders.
- Willens: Were there differences between the parties other than their difference with respect to political status?
- Sablan: Not really. It all boils down to relatives, your own clan.
- Willens: Is the Sablan family one of the larger families in the Marianas?
- Sablan: Yes. About 10-12 percent of the total population are one way or another Sablan. And you would not make a mistake by saying that if you're a Sablan you're a Republican.
- Willens: And if you're a Camacho, what's the general affiliation?
- Sablan: The general feeling if you're a Camacho you're a Democrat.

- Willens: And the Pangelinans?
- Sablan: Are Republicans. That's what it boils down to.
- Willens: And the Borjas?
- Sablan: Borjas are Republican. You seem to know all of the differences there. Villagomez, Tenorio are Republican. And what it really boils down as the common denominator, it seems like the affluent people are Republican.
- Willens: No comment on that here. Certainly the Democrats in the United States would argue that is true.
- Sablan: That is wrong as far as I'm concerned, because I'm a poor man. I'm still working like hell even after retirement age. But that's how it went down, and the Democrats here on Saipan capitalized on that politically. We are the party of the ordinary and therefore you should vote us in. So that covers a lot of ground and so everybody joins the Democratic Party of Saipan.
- Willens: Have people run as independent candidates, that is to say, unrelated to either party?
- Sablan: Well, lately yes, but not before.
- Willens: There was one example that I've heard about in 1972 when Pete A. Tenorio originally planned to run against Senator Borja for the Congress of Micronesia as a nominee of the Popular Party. And shortly before the election Senator Borja changed party affiliation from the Territorial Party to the Popular Party, and Pete A. Tenorio ran as an independent simply to prove the point. Do you have any recollection of that particular example?
- Sablan: Vaguely, but I don't recall Pete A. ever winning that.
- Willens: No, he did not win. Senator Borja won the election, but it was one of the many examples of party switching that one encounters in Marianas history.
- Sablan: That is quite true. Even today that prevails, we're just like a social club. Essentially some people feel that a political party is a social club. If all my friends are over there, I'll join that club, that political affiliation.
- Willens: That tendency to switch parties seems a little inconsistent with the strong family orientation of the parties.
- Sablan: Well, you always have some black sheep in the group that sort of wander off for their own convenience. But generally speaking, you're safe to assume that if you're Sablan you're Republican or Progressive or Territorial.
- Willens: During the late 1960s and the early 1970s, did you become active in the Chamber of Commerce?
- Sablan: Very active.
- Willens: To what extent has the Chamber of Commerce played a role in the economic development of the community?
- Sablan: It has played a very important role. Firstly, we had a difficult time gathering people to come to a common ground to exchange ideas on how we should move forward in the development of our economy.
- Willens: Why was that?
- Sablan: Because there's always that suspicion, you know, you are in retail, I'm in retail, why should we be sitting on same table? Therefore there is that little suspicion that always prevails

among business people. I don't know if you're aware of it or not, but the Chamber actually started in 1959-60 and my dad, Joeten, Oly, Villagomez and half a dozen others got together and said let's form a Chamber of Commerce. But Joeten was the first president and never called a meeting for any reelection. So he was the president for seven years.

Willens: For seven years.

Sablan: Until I showed up on the scene and I said, "Joe, you know you got to call a meeting."

Willens: A meeting with the specific purpose of . . .

Sablan: For the specific purpose of reorganizing and electing a president. If they elect you, you'll serve for one more term. But it was a very loose-ended organization.

Willens: Let me see if I understand this. Did the Chamber of Commerce meet for those seven years from time to time?

Sablan: Only when the United Nations visiting mission came. So that they can register their gripes. That was the only time that they ever met.

Willens: Did they generally take a coherent position with the United Nations visiting mission?

Sablan: Yes, at that point they had people like Rich Arelli, who was sort of an adversary. He was anti-anything. Bill Nabors, who was the lawyer in the crowd who came and wanted to put his point across. Some of the concerns that were registered with the United Nations visiting mission were against the United States, the administering authority. Although some of the people did not really subscribe to that, you know, they had to tag along because the Chamber said so. So the mission came every two years. That was the only active time that the Chamber met. In 1967 when I came and finally talked Joe into calling a meeting, it was so informal, it was after a golf game at Whispering Palm. There were eight of us sitting around and I said, "Joe, when are you going to call for a meeting?" And he said, "The meeting is convened right now."

Willens: And what happened at that meeting?

Sablan: I was appointed the president.

Willens: Were you elected?

Sablan: I was elected by the eight guys sitting around the table which is okay. You are now the president. Reorganize. So I did.

Willens: And how long were you president?

Sablan: Four years, for a term, but it gave me enough time to rewrite the constitution, the bylaws, and put it on solid ground.

Willens: What was your general sense of what role the Chamber of Commerce should play?

Sablan: Well, the Chamber of Commerce had to get together to speak its piece on how the economy ought to run and, if necessary, to influence the Legislature to enact those laws.

Willens: So would it speak on issues such as availability of foreign investment?

Sablan: Oh, definitely so. We addressed issues such as the need for foreign investment, the additional funding needed to sort of improve our infrastructure, plans. These were some of the issues we addressed.

Willens: You think it became an effective voice in the community?

Sablan: Yes, yes it is. Now we have something like 150-160 members.

- Willens: Have you been the president again in the succeeding years?
- Sablan: Twice. Yes. In 1972 I organized the first economic conference. Royal Taga was the only hotel then, with 55 rooms. Believe it or not, we had 130 people from outside. So instead of people going into the bedroom to go to sleep, I had three entertainers sitting in the bar of Royal Taga playing music until 5 o'clock in the morning. Then we just went right into the second day of the session.
- Willens: It was a two-day meeting?
- Sablan: It was a two-day meeting. We brought in the Vice Chairman of Japan Travel Bureau to speak about tourism and it was a very, very successful meeting. The Australian trade commissioners, the Filipinos, the Japanese came down to listen to what this guy had to say. Marty Pray of Continental came in and talked to us.
- Willens: What was his last name?
- Sablan: Marty Pray, P-R-A-Y. He was sort of the sales manager for Continental. So commitments were made during this economic conference.
- Willens: Well, particularly at 4 a.m. in the morning, I should think.
- Sablan: So anyway, the meeting was very successful. We charged \$10.00 for the two days, and we still made money, you know, \$406 was turned into the till.
- Willens: Was that one of the first conferences of its kind?
- Sablan: One of the first.
- Willens: Was that one of the more formal expressions of Japanese interest in the tourist business here?
- Sablan: The first expression ever.
- Willens: Who was the representative of Japan?
- Sablan: Mr. M. Konimotsu.
- Willens: Was that from the Japan travel agency?
- Sablan: Vice Chairman of the Japan Travel Bureau which was a quasi-government agency at that time.
- Willens: When you became active in the Chamber of Commerce in the late 1960s, you were undoubtedly made aware of the Robert R. Nathan Associates economic study that was done in or about 1966. Did you have the occasion to meet any of the participants in that study?
- Sablan: I know most all of them. Who did the study for Nathan, Bowden? Dr. Bowden, Jim Leonard, Ray Carpenter, who specialized in the agricultural area.
- Willens: Did you have any overall assessment of the study and its merit?
- Sablan: Yes, I think it gave us direction. It sort of brought to light things that we probably were not aware of that formulated the ingredients to move forward in our economy.
- Willens: I've heard it said that the Trust Territory has been overwhelmed with studies from Nathan to the Hawaiian architects over the last 20 plus years and that, no matter how meritorious, they all depend on follow through and funding. Do you have any reaction to that?
- Sablan: I think the Nathan economic study was quite important. It gave us a definite direction. It is unfortunate that there were very few references to those studies.

- Willens: Do you remember any effort to implement the recommendations of the Nathan report?
- Sablan: No effort, if any, that I was aware of. It took money to implement any of these programs and the money at the funding level that the Trust Territory government had at that time was hardly enough to even pay the payroll. I mean throughout the entire Micronesia. At that time I think it went up to about \$7.5 million dollars.
- Willens: It was up to more by the end of the 1960s but . . . .
- Sablan: It went up to \$75 million. But the report was good as a reference. The Trust Territory government themselves needed direction.
- Willens: Did the Trust Territory government agree with your assessment that it was a good report that provided some useful direction?
- Sablan: I think so. I think guys like Paul Winsor, W-I-N-S-O-R, who was the Commissioner for Resources and Development from Alaska, agreed that it was a good report. They probably used some of its recommendations that did not require funding as guidance.
- Willens: One of the observations in the Nathan report of particular interest to me is their conclusion that until the political status uncertainty was resolved you could not really develop and implement any meaningful plan for economic development.
- Sablan: That's probably right. That's probably right.
- Willens: When you had the meeting, for example, in 1972 that you made reference to, would you hear people express uncertainty about the future status of the Marianas and what that would mean for economic development?
- Sablan: Yes, well, I think the 1972 conference bore out several things. Number one, it bore out that we ourselves were incapable to do anything meaningful for our economy. We would still depend on agriculture of subsistence type and would never get into a mega- million dollar type project. That was borne out. And it was necessary that we obtain outside investment during that period of time, because we were talking about a lot of hotels, for instance, or a meaningful agricultural project. And that was the shortcoming of our people in those days. Even now, many of the people would only consider micro economy projects rather than a huge influx of multi-million dollar type operations.
- Willens: Well, but there was concern in the early 1970s, was there not, about the influx of alien laborers that would be associated with large-scale projects? Isn't that correct?
- Sablan: In the 1970s? There was some concern. But you know what we have to realize is that we must give and take. We cannot have it all our way and think that we're going to succeed. I think that what would have been ideal for our leaders to do, even now, is to set the pace. They should be the ones saying okay, we need to do this or that.
- Willens: Well, you're talking about the political leaders sort of setting the pace.
- Sablan: Yes, political leaders have to set the pace. In other words, what I have been pondering, and I'm sorry that I only worked three years for this government. If I had my own way of handling the future planning for this island, although I had only three years, I would have required, at least I would have set the pace by saying okay, let's look at who we are serving—the 17,000 local people who must come on the top. We must work towards improving the livelihood and the welfare of the 17,000 people and not the 25,000 non-resident workers. That should be incidental. We got to look at the livelihood of these people and how we're going to forge ahead to bring about a comfortable life for these people. Everything else should be secondary. One of the problems that I encountered

when I was a Special Assistant for Planning and Budgeting was when we appeared before U.S. Congress for additional funding. They always said, "Well you're asking for sewer money. The only people that are using the sewers are the hotels." Well, that's not necessarily true, because when we go there and ask for sewer money we want it for San Roque we want it for Chalan Kanoa, and if these people can hook on, that's incidental to me. I think the leaders should have really sort of plowed the way. How many hotels do we really need on this island? How many tour operators do we need on the island? What sort of construction and how fast must we move? These are still unanswered questions that the government must address as soon as possible. In other words, you have to be able to manipulate the economy to a size that is comfortable for this island. The way it is now is lopsided. There are more outsiders coming in to work for the 17,000. I don't think that's right. And now it's on a down trend. Certainly somewhere along the line it's got to go down and then level off because we have been both living in a false economy, which will never sustain the level that it is today. So what is going to happen? Recently I found out that there's 7,000 nonresident workers less on Saipan now. It used to be 22,000; it is now about 15,000.

- Willens: Do you believe those statistics are accurate?
- Sablan: Yes.
- Willens: What accounted for the decline?
- Sablan: The cause for the decline? Concern for the decline? I didn't quite understand.
- Willens: What is the cause of the decline as you understand it?
- Sablan: Less construction. So substantially the construction workers are going back. The ancillary projects, for instance, have all diminished basically because of the problems that we're having here today. And good or bad, I think that it is good that we bring everything down to a realistic size so that we can constantly operate at that level and not have a distorted up and down labor growth.
- Willens: That's a very interesting proposition, and I want to come back to that. Let me take you back to 1972 again and the appointment of the Marianas Political Status Commission. Did you have any views at the time as to the membership of the Commission?
- Sablan: Very limited.
- Willens: There was a slot dedicated to the business community, and I believe the Chamber of Commerce designated Joeten. Was there any dissension on that particular appointment?
- Sablan: No, not at all. I think we trusted Joeten to do the right thing for the business community as far as I'm concerned.
- Willens: What was your assessment, at the time, of Joeten, both as a businessman and a leader in the community?
- Sablan: He was a well-respected person. He is a successful person and we looked up to Joeten for intelligent decisions and guidance.
- Willens: Would you say that he was concerned in that frame of time about competition from outside economic interests?
- Sablan: I don't think so. I happen to know Joeten very well. Other than my brothers and sisters, Joeten, and I still maintain that today, is my best friend. And Joeten and I have many hours discussing the future of this island and his main concern is that we, the locals, the

Saipanese people, the people of the Marianas should not be overtaken by the outside. That was the only thing that we talked about.

Willens: Are you recalling now conversations with him at the time when he was on the Commission?

Sablan: Yes, on the political status, that is correct.

Willens: Did he seek the position?

Sablan: I think that he was appointed. I don't think he lobbied or anything like that. I think the people just voted him in.

Willens: Did you remember any reactions that he had to the first two or three sessions of negotiations with the United States?

Sablan: No I really don't. I don't.

Willens: After the second round, there was a Joint Communiqué that laid out in general terms agreement on a proposed commonwealth. Following that Communiqué, three members of the Commission gave an interview to the *Marianas Variety* in which they expressed concern about the pace of the negotiations. The three were Joeten, Felix Rabauliman, and Dr. Palacios. All members of the Territorial Party. Do you have any recollection that the Territorial Party felt that the Popular Party was dominating the work of the Marianas Political Status Commission?

Sablan: No, I do not recall that at all. Perhaps the known fact is that the dominant party is the Popular Party, and if they showed any kind of political strength, in my own judgment that would have been natural, because they are the dominant party. They have more members than the Territorial. But I did not recall any dissension from this.

Willens: In the interview the three Commission members expressed some concern about separation from the rest of Micronesia, some concern about the loss of sovereignty to the United States. It was a thoughtful interview, and my question to you is whether you remember any reservations that Joeten might have expressed to you in private on those issues?

Sablan: No, I think what Joe really wanted to do was to maintain unity rather than to fragment Micronesia. I'm not really sure why he took that position. But I recall that he said that we've gone this far, we're much more powerful, and we'll probably have better recognition from the United States if we all sort of stick together. But unfortunately that was not the way it came out.

Willens: Later that year in 1973, Joeten resigned from the Commission. He was replaced by Pete A. Tenorio, who was proposed by the Chamber of Commerce and accepted by the District Administrator. In his letter of resignation, Joeten said that he was resigning in part because he carried with him a reputation for being a spokesman of the business community and he suggested that his ability to participate in the work of the Commission was hindered by that reputation. I wonder whether you have any recollection as to the circumstances that might have persuaded him to resign?

Sablan: Well, I think that some of the members of the Chamber at that time had different ideas about the CNMI and its political future. Joe probably felt that he was not representing the general feeling of the members of the Chamber.

Willens: Is it your sense that many Chamber members wanted to be more supportive of the separate negotiations than Joeten personally felt comfortable with?

Sablan: Yes. We had come to know the leaders of Micronesia and I think Joe had a certain

sentimentality for unification, meaning one entity covering all of Micronesia. I think his hope was that we all should stick together and become one entity rather than several fragments. Right or wrong, I couldn't tell you.

Willens: Did the Territorial Party have an official position at that time about the separate negotiations?

Sablan: The Territorial Party as a whole, generally speaking, was in favor of direct annexation. It actually wanted to separate the Marianas from the rest of Micronesia because it appeared as though the rest of Micronesia was talking about independence. Our understanding of what independence is all about was different from their understanding of what independence is all about. They wanted to become independent, but we feared that we did not have the wherewithal to declare independence.

Willens: I've had one of our mutual friends tell me recently that the people in the other districts had a strong sense of nation building. They wanted to be president of their own islands. They wanted to have a minister of foreign affairs and that seems like a very human, understandable aspiration. And the question I didn't ask our mutual friend is why didn't the people here have the same sense of nation building?

Sablan: I think that our people realized the value of becoming part of the United States. Realized the value of telling the truth that we are not ready to take things on our own and become independent, as opposed to the leaders of Micronesia. I do not think this was brought about as a result of our differences, because we really did not know these people during the Japanese occupation.

Willens: That may be true, many of the leaders of Micronesia and the Marianas went to school together in Hawaii or Guam or Truk. Many of them have friends among the more sophisticated political leaders, and I wonder whether there wasn't more commonality at least at the educated well-trained level of Micronesians than you are suggesting?

Sablan: There are a few, but not enough to have the influence. And therefore I think we went on our own. We really feared the move by the other islands in Micronesia to not become part of the United States. We were afraid of following that. We wanted something irrevocable because we have preached all along that we want to become part of the United States and that might have been jeopardized if we teamed up with the rest of Micronesia.

Willens: One of the three Commission members who gave the interview in June 1973 was Felix Rabauliman. Do you have any recollection of Felix and can you describe his strengths and weaknesses for me?

Sablan: Felix as you know was an educator, he was a teacher during that period of time and he's respected among the Carolinian community. However, I don't think he was the kind of a guy who would lead, in my own opinion. Maybe within his own family he can lead, but generally speaking he just did not have the dynamics of being the Carolinian leader that would, you know, forge the way.

Willens: You think that he would be generally pursuing the positions that were adopted by the Carolinian association?

Sablan: He was a passive guy. He wants things to go easy, let's sit back and see what happens.

Willens: Do the Carolinians have the same sort of tradition of trying to reach a consensus as do the Chamorros and maybe even more so?

Sablan: Yes. They pretty much leave it up to leaders to talk to them and say this is our position, and then nod their heads. They're a passive group of people.

- Willens: Now how about Dr. Palacios, who was the third member. I don't think either of us would describe him as passive?
- Sablan: He was not. He was a very outspoken guy.
- Willens: How do you remember Dr. Palacios?
- Sablan: Dr. Palacios was a well-educated man. He received his medical training down at the Fiji School of Medicine. He was also one of the Saipanese that got into higher education during the Japanese occupation. Therefore, I guess he has a broader mind than many of us. But Dr. Palacios had a different idea.
- Willens: What was his idea, do you recall?
- Sablan: It's difficult to describe. Anytime you talked to Dr. Palacios, he would refer you to history. Hitler did this. Mussolini did that and whoever else did that, Stalin. And he impressed me as a man who really knows his European history. But when it really came down to making a hard decision and assessment as to what is really good for the future of this island, now that I'm the age that I am, I don't necessarily subscribe to his own idea.
- Willens: You don't necessarily what?
- Sablan: Subscribe to his ideology.
- Willens: But ultimately Dr. Palacios did support the Covenant both within the Commission and publicly. In the early years of the negotiations, though, he expressed reservations publicly and in private to me and to others about the need to educate the young people, to be Micronesians first, and to be apprehensive of yielding sovereignty to the United States. You recall any conversations with Dr. Palacios along those lines?
- Sablan: No, I do not. I'm sorry to say.
- Willens: Would you have regarded him as a leader in the Carolinian community at the time?
- Sablan: Yes. He's somewhat of a leader. But so long as my dad was alive, he was the leader. Because he's regarded as the high chief and more people would listen to my dad than they would to Felix or Dr. Palacios. We have an expression in Chomorro called "tomtum."
- Willens: How do you spell that?
- Sablan: T-O-M-T-U-M, tomtrum. Tomtrum means you have sense. "Malatie" means you're educated. So there's that difference of maybe in a sense that he's intelligent. Smart and intelligent are two different things as I construe it. And Dr. Palacios was sort of looked at as an intelligent person.
- Willens: But perhaps not having common, practical sense?
- Sablan: Maybe he lacks in that area. That's why he probably was leery at the outset of what was going on. But once he's been able to look more broadly he'd probably change his mind and say okay, this is what we're going to do.
- Willens: I think that's a fair description of the process that he did go through. Let me ask you about some of the other members of the Commission. The chairman, of course, was a young American-trained lawyer, Ed Pangelinan. What was your sense of Mr. Pangelinan as a leader and member of the community?
- Sablan: We have great respect for Eddie. He is one of the few, at least of that age at that time, that sacrificed, got an education, and became a lawyer. I think that in itself is deserving a hell of a big recognition among the Chamorros.

- Willens: Now he was much younger than several other members of the Commission, and he had very weighty responsibilities that I watched him perform. Did you ever hear any concerns expressed about the way in which he would manage the work of the Commission?
- Sablan: None whatsoever. I have great respect for Eddie. Many of us respect Eddie for what he did and how he led the Commission. And we have nothing but good things to say about him.
- Willens: How about Vicente T. Camacho?
- Sablan: Vicente T. Camacho.
- Willens: That is Ben Camacho, correct?
- Sablan: Yes, I know, I know.
- Willens: What's your recollection of Mr. Camacho?
- Sablan: Well, Ben comes from the old school, as I did, except that maybe he was not as exposed as I was. Ben, again, is one of the tomtums. He had limited practical experience in modern life, I guess. But I don't know, quite frankly, I don't know Ben too much. I don't think he was an astute politician. And I think he's one of those guys that you have to show to be convinced. A show-me type.
- Willens: He was from the Municipal Council.
- Sablan: He was a member of the Municipal Council, right.
- Willens: For many years as I recall.
- Sablan: Right.
- Willens: So he some political support in the community.
- Sablan: In the Democratic and Popular Party.
- Willens: What is your recollection of Herman Q. Guerrero who, along with Ed Pangelinan, was one the active forces in bringing about the separate negotiations?
- Sablan: Herman Q. comes from a good family, a religious family. He was well-respected in the Popular Party. He was one of the officers of the party for many, many years and people looked to him for guidance and advice which he very cautiously gave them. I have great respect for Herman.
- Willens: How was he regarded by members of the Territorial Party?
- Sablan: Well, there's always that adverse feeling against the opposition, but generally he deserved the respect of many of us.
- Willens: Was he regarded as thoughtful?
- Sablan: A thoughtful, yes, and a good leader. In spite of his affiliation with the other party.
- Willens: Do you have any recollection of Daniel T. Muna?
- Sablan: Dan, yes, he's kind of a reckless soul. He is a rabble-rouser. In a group I guess it's okay to have people like that because it keeps you thinking. But Dan is okay. He's a matured politician and was always voted in, somehow. But Danny is quite outspoken. Sometimes recklessly outspoken. But, he's okay.
- Willens: You suggest that maybe he didn't have the respect in the political community as some of the other leaders of the Popular Party?

- Sablan: I think so.
- Willens: David, what is your recollection of Felipe Salas?
- Sablan: Mr. Salas, as you know, is a long time clerk of the court. He has the respect of the community, he served in the Legislature, he was educated by the Japanese school, completed five years of Japanese schooling, and so generally speaking we have great respect for Judge Salas.
- Willens: What does it mean to have completed five years of Japanese schooling?
- Sablan: That was the highest schooling that any native on the island could have completed.
- Willens: Well, what was it equivalent to?
- Sablan: How do I describe the equivalence as compared to what? Because we had no other schooling.
- Willens: Well, I recall reading that the Japanese just educated people up to a relatively young age.
- Sablan: Fifth grade.
- Willens: How old would you be when you graduated from fifth grade? Ten years old? Twelve years?
- Sablan: No, you went in there when you were eight and you come out when you're 13, five years later. And you're normally given reading, writing, arithmetic, abacus, agriculture. In the morning you did academics, and in the afternoon you went outside and did farming. For a solid five years.
- Willens: And that was the extent of the education offered?
- Sablan: That is it.
- Willens: And so when you say that Mr. Salas had the benefit of that, he had the benefit of all that was available?
- Sablan: That is correct.
- Willens: So does that mean that not all native children were allowed to have the five years of schooling?
- Sablan: No, we all had to go to school. It's just that he was at that age when he could graduate from fifth year. Some of us as a result of the war/invasion did not complete five years. I'm one of them. As a matter of fact I was the last class that completed five years.
- Willens: I see. Would you regard Mr. Salas as more of a leader than a follower?
- Sablan: No, he certainly is a leader. Even up to today he's done a good job, his children are all well-educated, and he is a good father and a good leader of the community.
- Willens: Did you happen to know any of the representatives from Tinian, such as Herman M. Monglona?
- Sablan: I just know them by name and, living in Guam for so long, I don't know them too well.
- Willens: Do you have any recollection of Benjamin T. Manglona as a political leader in the early 1970s?
- Sablan: Yes, Ben often speaks about where he got his political education. He credits my dad for what he is today. He said he learned all there is to know about politics from my father. And he is a veteran. He's one of those who lived and worked in politics on Rota for the

- longest time and still is in politics. So I think, in Rota, Ben is well-respected. In addition, he was a registered surveyor. And that's how he got to know my dad, who later became the Land Title Officer for the district. Ben was a surveyor for Rota. And floated into politics after that.
- Willens: I recall him being a very strong force within the Commission and the subsequent Constitutional Convention. I recall hearing that he was a very effective orator in the local language.
- Sablan: Very.
- Willens: I could see that when the Commission members spoke in the vernacular. His whole personality took on a very strong force. Is that your understanding?
- Sablan: Yes. But you see, Ben is a master linguist in Chamorro. There are not too many left that speak like Ben in Chamorro. There are not too many. Even today when you listen to him during campaigns, he has a good command of the Chamorro language, more so than many elderly people here. Generally Ben was and is, and will always be, highly respected by particularly the people of Rota and certainly us here in Saipan and Tinian. He's a good leader, he's an honest leader. He's a very congenial person.
- Willens: One last name from the Commission and that is Joaquin or Mitch Pangelinan, who was a active Popular Party partisan. How would you characterize Mitch Pangelinan?
- Sablan: Well, Mitch is a very forceful fellow. The people that have worked with Mitch in the mid-1970s and so forth have high regard for Mitch, but he's a party man. He is resented by the Republican Party or the Territorial Party in those days because he was the force behind the Democratic Party just as Ben Santos was. So to that extent, because he had a very forceful personality, not too many people liked him.
- Willens: But did he, so to speak, make more political enemies than someone like Ben Santos did?
- Sablan: About the same.
- Willens: They both were regarded as being very partisan.
- Sablan: Very partisan-type people. But intelligent, he's very smart. A very smart man.
- Willens: Did you happen to have any occasion to meet Ambassador Williams during the course of the negotiations between the United States and the MPSC?
- Sablan: Yes, I had the pleasure of meeting Ambassador Williams. Yes, I had the occasion of meeting Ambassador Williams but he is . . . .
- Willens: Yes, go ahead.
- Sablan: I don't know if you recall, I was the master of ceremony for the signing of the Covenant. At social events during the negotiations, I had the pleasure of meeting Ambassador Williams.
- Willens: What was your reaction to the way in which he conducted his responsibilities?
- Sablan: Well, I think he did his best. We have great respect for decisions that he made. He guided our people to do the proper thing.
- Willens: Did you ever hear any complaint about Ambassador Williams from members of the Commission?

- Sablan: Not at all. I think the members of the Commission had great respect for him and looked up to Ambassador Williams as the person who was going to do a fair job of negotiation. And we all respected him for that.
- Willens: Did you ever hear any complaints from him about members of the Commission?
- Sablan: No, not at all.
- Willens: Did you come to know any other members of U.S. delegation?
- Sablan: John Dorrance. I don't know if you know him or not. I think I had more contact with John Dorrance than anyone in the Commission. Was he a member of the Commission?
- Willens: No. He was a State Department liaison officer here for several years, and he wrote very detailed memoranda back to Washington that I've had the opportunity to read. He's now deceased, I understand. He was someone I was looking forward to talking to. What was your evaluation of Mr. Dorrance as an observer of the local scene?
- Sablan: Well, you can tell he comes from the State Department because they're kind of a unique breed in the sense of the way they operate, the way they talk to you, and their desire to not want to be misunderstood. He was very cautious of what sort of impression that he gave people.
- Willens: What sort of impression did he give you?
- Sablan: Well, I was quite impressed. He's a very meticulous, articulate person, and he did his job quite well, I think, in informing the United States what was transpiring here.
- Willens: Did he help inform you and others in the community as to what the United States was planning to do?
- Sablan: Not really. Other than the fact that I remember very distinctly meeting John at the airport, the old airport, Kobler Field, when he got off the airplane and I was up there meeting other people. He made the statement that, "I think we have a breakthrough, that we're going to negotiate separately for the Northern Marianas. And the agreement is going to be known as a covenant." I remember that very distinctly. He was with this Wilson chap?
- Willens: Yes.
- Sablan: Yes.
- Willens: Do you remember when that took place?
- Sablan: Gee, that was probably around, I don't know 1973-74, around that time.
- Willens: You mentioned that you presided at the signing ceremonies. Those are the ones at Mt. Carmel, was it?
- Sablan: That's correct.
- Willens: What is your recollection of that day in terms of the sense and the atmosphere?
- Sablan: It was a very historic day as far as I was concerned. Number one, it was rather unique that I'd been chosen to be the master of ceremony of the signing, realizing that I was already a U.S. citizen.
- Willens: How did it come about that you were selected?
- Sablan: I really don't know. Somehow my name popped out and all of a sudden I was the master of ceremony. I saw a picture of me taking sips like I was the guy that was preaching. So anyway I really don't know why and I forgot how I got to be the master of ceremony. But I

thoroughly enjoyed the historic event and participating even in this little role as the master of ceremony.

Willens: Do you have any recollections of the speeches or the reactions to the speeches?

Sablan: Yes. The only thing that vividly stuck to my mind was that the Covenant was not all signed. It was not signed by some of the members of the Commission.

Willens: Do you remember why that was?

Sablan: I really don't know why that was. You're probably in a better shape to answer that than I am. I know that guys like Rasa did not sign, and I've forgotten whether a couple of other guys didn't sign.

Willens: Now he's someone I didn't ask you about. What is your recollection of Oscar Rasa?

Sablan: Oscar Rasa had a forceful personality. He's the kind of a guy that would try to persuade you and sway you to his way of thinking. I was not close to Oscar.

Willens: I heard he was a very good grassroots campaigner.

Sablan: He was. That he was. And of course, you know, his mother is from Saipan and he was brought up in Ponape. I guess his background was such that he had this personality of being very pushy, so to speak.

Willens: Why do you think he ultimately got in trouble?

Sablan: Because I think nobody could tell him anything proper. He wouldn't take any advice. That's how he is now.

Willens: Do you remember on the day of the signing of the Covenant that there was a hearing in court about an effort to enjoin the signing ceremony?

Sablan: I remember that. Wasn't that the move made by Oscar?

Willens: I understand that it was a lawsuit initiated at Mr. Rasa's request.

Sablan: Yes, that didn't go through. We went right ahead with the signing.

Willens: Were you in the courtroom?

Sablan: No, I was not.

Willens: Do you remember hearing anything about it?

Sablan: I heard, yes, vaguely remember that there was a procedure going on, but we went right ahead. I know I kept asking because I had to individually call the signatories to the Covenant. And there were a couple of people that I kept calling and calling and they never showed up. So I just came out with a statement that I am sure that he will show up later on and we'll have him sign it later. It's too bad that he's not here to be witnessing.

Willens: So you did not know in advance that some members of the Commission were not intending to sign.

Sablan: No, I didn't know. I just did my own little thing in trying to get everybody to be involved in the signing.

Willens: And so you remember calling out their names more than once.

Sablan: Several times, yes. Several times. They never showed up, so I presume they were somewhere else.

- Willens: Do you remember hearing anything about the debates within the Commission near the end of the negotiations as to whether to approve it and what particular controversies there were?
- Sablan: No, I was not privy to those kinds of information.
- Willens: In the very last stages of the Covenant negotiations, there was an effort by Tinian and Rota to revise the Covenant so as to require that there be a bicameral legislature in which the three islands, major islands, would have equal representation in one of the two houses.
- Sablan: Yes, that was a strong move. Just vaguely I remember the strong effort being put forth which later provided for the Senate, I guess it was.
- Willens: That's correct, and there has been some discussion since that that's been one of the major problems caused by the Covenant and the subsequent constitution in that it built a governmental structure here in which a conflict is perhaps inevitable. Do you have some sense of one, the reasonableness of that request by Tinian and Rota, and secondly whether political leadership can help surmount that difficulty?
- Sablan: Well, I feel that there ought to be an equitable representation, and the only way that I felt that people would have sort of a check and balance was to have these two houses. I don't necessarily agree on the size of the house or senate and the amount of money they're making. Right from the outset, I never have agreed to that. I think it should have been voluntary, quite frankly.
- Willens: You think that service in the Legislature should have been on a voluntary, non-compensated basis?
- Sablan: An honorable position, non-compensating. If it was going to be compensation, leave it below a \$1,000 a year. That's an honorarium.
- Willens: And why did you think that would produce a better legislature?
- Sablan: Well, the thing was that because then those people who are looking for a job do not necessarily have to fight for the position. And that if it were voluntary it would be more realistic and not only that, we do not have the money to survive. You know this big payroll that we talk about. In other words, right now part of the incentive to become a legislator is the leadership and the amount of money that you get and all the benefits that you get that comes with it. To me, I don't agree with that because I've seen many cities in the United States that do not have that. You have the mayor and you have councilmen who really are volunteers and get a small honorarium each month.
- Willens: I gather from what you say that you were prepared to support in principle the concept of a bicameral legislature?
- Sablan: I agree.
- Willens: Now drawing on your experience over the last 15 years, when there have been many periods of political stalemate, can you give us some judgment as to whether or not the bicameral legislature has been a cause of these difficulties?
- Sablan: Yes, that is correct. Number one, but there ought to be some sort of an equitable representation. I still maintain that the formula that is presented by this bicameral type of house is a good one as far as I'm concerned. Having a unicameral type legislature either by population or by other means will never be equitable. To give you an example, one of the main reasons why I was opposed to integration with Guam was it would have created an unequal representation because our population at that time was only 14,000,

- as opposed to 70-80,000 Guamanians. How would you bring these two factions on a common ground and be equally treated? Never, unless you have a bicameral house to sort of equalize one or the other.
- Willens: Do you believe the present system gives Tinian and Rota in essence a veto power over policies of the commonwealth?
- Sablan: Yes. Right or wrong, I feel that one checks the other. And if it's reasonable, I'm sure that it will go through both houses. If the legislation or the considerations before them are reasonable, it will go through.
- Willens: There was a recent example in the last month or two with respect to an impasse over the 1993 fiscal year budget. One issue, as I understand it, was the allocation or expenditure of certain unutilized funds. And that was seen, by the press at least, as an example of Rota and Tinian leadership trying to keep funds for their own political use on their islands, whereas they should have been sent back to the Commonwealth treasury.
- Sablan: Howard, I don't blame the system. I blame the individuals that fill those positions. They're being greedy, to say the least.
- Willens: You think with the proper kind of people or more sophisticated or compromising kind of leaders, the system can work?
- Sablan: Oh, sure. I believe that, and I think that the house should really be reduced.
- Willens: Reduced in size?
- Sablan: Reduced in size. I don't know, six or five. Right now there are three senators from each senatorial district, and I think that's too big to begin with. But look at the United States. How many people are there in the House of Representatives and how many people are there in the Senate? And they come under the budget because they place public above self. Here it appears to be different, and I don't claim to be an expert in the area of politics. But just from looking at it and working for the Governor's office as the Planning and Budget Assistant to the Governor, I noticed that there appears to be a lot of grabbing in all different directions for their own personal benefit so that they may be reelected. But I don't think that's the right way to do it. Now the other thing that the Tinian people are doing is that they get this multi-year Covenant funding. They get a proportionate share, 12-1/2 percent, wherein they have not spent that money for capital development and infrastructure development. And yet they want more money still coming from Saipan. That to me is wrong. And somebody ought to let them understand that we know what's happening. But you know that a comprehensive understanding of the budget process is lacking in these houses [of the Legislature].
- Willens: Were you surprised going back 20 years or so with the extent of the request by the United States for land on Tinian? Do you recall what reaction you had in 1973 when the United States first announced in detail the desire to have all of Tinian available for military use?
- Sablan: We welcomed that, and we were really hoping that the Defense Department would utilize the acres that are being leased.
- Willens: Are you disappointed now that they haven't done that?
- Sablan: To an extent, yes. Because number one, we were under the impression that the Defense Department would utilize that at least a year after the lease was finalized.
- Willens: And you're thinking of about 1983, is that correct?

- Sablan: About that time, yes. But somehow it never materialized and as we went on, two, three years after that, nothing was forthcoming.
- Willens: Did you ever have any conversations with people in the Defense Department or other U.S. agencies about their plans to develop Tinian?
- Sablan: Well, lately yes, but not in those days. I did not have the privilege of meeting any of those people.
- Willens: Have you been involved recently in this effort to discuss with the Defense Department the terms on which some of the land might leased back to the Commonwealth?
- Sablan: No, other than what the Governor tells me, that the Defense Department has no plan to use it in the immediate future. So we were somewhat disappointed. We were looking at the military to be the mainstay of our economy, at least in Tinian. But that did not materialize.
- Willens: Do you think that the economic development in the Commonwealth would have been different if there had been a substantial military facility constructed on Tinian?
- Sablan: Yes.
- Willens: How so?
- Sablan: Well, we were hoping that the military would use that to sort of stage their equipment, their hardware, for any eventual conflict in Southeast Asia or China or Russia.
- Willens: Were you thinking of it in terms of jobs for local people?
- Sablan: Jobs, spending by the military, reversion of taxes that they might pay like they do in Guam. Those would have really helped us. But those did not materialize.
- Willens: But would that have lessened the reliance on tourism?
- Sablan: Yes. Definitely.
- Willens: Would the benefits have accrued principally to Tinian or do you think they would have been shared more broadly within the Commonwealth?
- Sablan: Well, many of us here feel that the leasing of Tinian was a Commonwealth privilege, and therefore the money should have been shared by all.
- Willens: Do you think the idea of putting the money that the United States paid for leasing Tinian and other properties into a trust fund was an appropriate way to deal with the funds?
- Sablan: Yes, I would go along with that.
- Willens: What do you think would have happened if that had not been done?
- Sablan: Well, if it was not done, setting up an endowment where we reap the interest and live on the interest, the funds might have been long gone by now for infrastructure development or government operations or whatever.
- Willens: After the Covenant was signed, there was a period of about four or five months of political education and campaigning leading up to a plebiscite on the Covenant. Did you play any role in the campaign for or against the Covenant?
- Sablan: Not against, definitely. In 1978 I was really not too politically inclined.
- Willens: We're talking about 1975 now.
- Sablan: I was not too politically inclined in 1975 and I tried as much as possible to stay out of it,

because at that time people still viewed me as an outsider because I just returned 10 years ago from Guam and I'm a U.S. citizen. I'm not supposed to be doing anything that could be misconstrued as influencing.

Willens: Do you have any recollections of the leaders of the opposition to the Covenant and what motivated their position?

Sablan: No, I don't recall that at all.

Willens: Do you have any recollection of Commissioner Canham and the role that he played during that period?

Sablan: As a Resident Commissioner, right.

Willens: First as a Plebiscite Commissioner then as a Resident Commissioner.

Sablan: Resident commissioner thereafter. Not really. I can't recall distinctly.

Willens: Did you have any occasion during the 1970s either before or after the Covenant to go to the United States and testify before committees of the United States Congress?

Sablan: With regard to the Covenant?

Willens: The Covenant or the implementation.

Sablan: I was not too deeply involved in politics. I want to repeat that I was viewed as more or less an outsider because I was a U.S. citizen. I did not want to jeopardize anything that would be misconstrued as influencing these people to change their mind or at least work towards that. So I purposefully did not become too active.

Willens: During those years when you were very active in your business ventures and particularly with respect to the Intercontinental. Did that take a good deal of your time in putting that deal together?

Sablan: By then I was the vice president of Microl, I was the president of PMC, Pacific Micronesia Corporation, that owned the hotel, I had a car rental [agency] going on, and I had a consultancy. All of that kept me pretty busy.

Willens: Did you have any reservation at the time about the fairness of the campaign in advance of the plebiscite?

Sablan: I think that it was amply put forward, and people were fully aware. I mean, the 14,000 people knew what they were doing, what they were getting into, as far as I'm concerned.

Willens: Actually I was challenged recently on that by a law school professor who said that the people out here didn't know what they were doing when they voted on the Covenant. I felt somewhat at a loss to answer that, although I felt strongly on the subject, because it would have sounded self-serving. But there have been those who criticized the fact there were only four months or so to organize, mount and implement a political education campaign.

Sablan: It was well put forth, believe me. It was well put forth. I felt that we were well-educated on what we were going into and what the contents of the Covenant were. We knew what we wanted to put in there. For instance, the alienation of land. We felt then that we wanted to be given the right to develop our own property, to let us mature first before we start thinking about selling our land. That provision in our Constitution, I'm sure, was a result of that. The Covenant document, to me, is a well put-together document. We knew what it was all about, and we knew we what were going into.

Willens: Do you think that the land alienation provision in the Covenant was supported by the majority of the people?

Sablan: Yes.

Willens: Because there were some occasions when political leaders in the Marianas expressed reservations about it on the grounds that it seemed paternalistic and that owners of land ought to be free to do with their land whatever they wanted to.

Sablan: Yes, but you see what they do not understand is the fact we are new into this game and that what the United States was trying to do is to reserve the right to own land for the locals only until they mature. Politically or economically. And when you mature to a degree that you know what you're doing and you can foresee the consequences on both sides, then you can do whatever you want to do with your land. I think that's why the 25-year deal was cranked into our Constitution. But let me just say this. There are some of us, I'm one of them, that do not feel that that provision should have been in there for another reason. We are part of the United States in that I can go to the United States, buy and own land and I think that a United States citizen anywhere should also come and buy and own land here. I maintained that then, and I maintain that position today.

Willens: So if the matter had been put before you for a vote, you would have voted against that particular provision?

Sablan: Sure.

Willens: How do you think the provision has worked out in view of all the recent litigation involving Article 12 of the Constitution?

Sablan: I think the provision is working as intended. And that is to protect these people from the high-faluting dealers that would come in, the property buyers that would buy out the land and then we'd be outside looking in. The protective measure is there.

Willens: But it's been argued that the way it's been interpreted has been a substantial deterrent to investment in the Commonwealth in recent years.

Sablan: Well, you see, human beings are the ones that are making that decision. And it is a deterrent in a sense that the people that want to invest do not want to be bothered with details. They want to come in here hands free, they want to be able to do their things, and I can understand that. But I think they lack a full understanding of what this is about.

Willens: But as an investor they certainly have a right to know that the person who's leasing them the property has the legal right to do that, so they don't invest tens of millions of dollars and later find out that their investment is being challenged.

Sablan: That's true. There are many other places in this world other than Saipan where you can invest and probably have a better and safer investment without subsequent problems. But I totally feel that the people here have been well served by Article 12 and the protection given to them to own their land and decide later what they want to do after they have given it due consideration.

Willens: Did you play any role in advising the Constitutional Convention in 1976? Or did you stay aside from that for the same reasons that you indicated earlier?

Sablan: I stayed aside, except I made one appearance at one of the public hearings where I tried to influence them to go easy on the representatives and senators salaries. I did not totally agree on the special office for Carolinian affairs. And I felt that it's an honorary position to

serve the people and therefore we should not go hogwild in setting a very high salary for the senators and representatives. Basically that was my contribution.

Willens: There was an interesting change in the political power in a few years' period of time there. In 1974 when the Covenant was almost ready for signature, there was an election where Pete Tenorio defeated Ed Pangelinan for the Congress of Micronesia and Oscar Rasa got elected to the Congress of Micronesia. It demonstrated that the Territorial Party seemed to have gained in favor, and it was suggested that Territorial Party wanted the negotiations to go more slowly and that the people weren't ready to agree to a commonwealth status. Do you have any recollection of that particular campaign?

Sablan: Yes, I think that was more Joeten talking than anybody else. But I believe the public at large did not necessarily follow that thought. Our leaders who are obviously more well-versed wanted to slow down; I think Joeten was one of them. But generally the people felt that they were ready to cast their vote and make their decision on political status.

Willens: But they supported the Territorial Party candidates who wanted to go slow, more slowly than the Popular Party candidates, but nonetheless the Covenant was signed two or three months later.

Sablan: Yes, I think that was the difference between the parties, but ultimately the public prevailed.

Willens: When it came time for the Constitutional Convention there was an election for delegates which was supposed to be on a non-partisan basis. But the Territorial Party won a very substantial number, a majority of the delegates. Was that election a partisan one?

Sablan: Yes, it was. By all means.

Willens: What were the issues on which the parties had any differences?

Sablan: Well, the main difference, if I recall correctly, was essentially if the other side won, we will not have it the way we had told you we would have. This was the preaching of the Territorial/Republican Party.

Willens: I don't understand that.

Sablan: Well, the thing was that there were obviously some differences. Number one, the Territorial Party (now the Republican Party) had been indoctrinating our people of how this Covenant was going to come about, how the negotiations were going to be, and all of the goodies. They said that if you vote for the Popular (or the Democrats), what we have told you might not necessarily become true.

Willens: Were there any particular representations that the Territorial Party had made that were significant from a political appeal standpoint?

Sablan: Not that I can recall specifically, other than their telling the supporters that if the other side came in, it would not be the kind of agreement that we had told you it would be.

Willens: As it happened, Larry I. Guerrero got the largest member of votes and became President of the Constitutional Convention and all the important offices were filled with Territorial Party members. We understand that the Popular Party may have decided that none of its people should accept offices in this Convention. Do you have any recollection of political issues of that kind?

Sablan: No, I do not. All I know is that the party gained a lot of ground there and Larry became president. But I was not aware of the internal feud that was going on.

Willens: What was your sense of Larry Guerrero in those years? He had been active in the Marianas District Legislature and active in political life and was head of the Constitutional Convention. What was your assessment of that?

Sablan: He was a great leader. He has the sentiment of the people in mind. All he did was work. The great majority of the people, whether they're Democrats or not, had great confidence in Larry.

Willens: He was not as well-educated as some of the other members of the Convention.

Sablan: No, he was not.

Willens: Was that a disadvantage? Was it a disadvantage for him politically or an advantage?

Sablan: Not necessarily, because again he was "tomtum." He was an intelligent person. He might not have been the smartest guy academically, but he has a common sense to draw some smart conclusions and that's how they viewed Larry in those days. And that's why he not only drew the highest vote here but was voted in as the president.

Willens: What do you remember about the first election for the Commonwealth government under the new Constitution? Do you remember any issues particularly with the selection of the party candidates that resulted in a slate of Dr. Camacho and Frank Ada running on one ticket against Joeten and Oly Borja on the other?

Sablan: You recall in those days the Democratic, the Popular Party, was still very, very strong. And regardless of who you had as a candidate for governor at that time, he was a natural winner. Because they were like 60 percent strong in total vote. I was approached. A delegate was designated by the Democratic Party, Popular Party, to visit me at Microl to ask me if I would run on their ticket.

Willens: For what?

Sablan: As the governor. For the governor before Carlos Camacho was considered. And I felt very, very uncomfortable because my father was the founder of the Progressive/Territorial, now Republican, Party. And for me to go against all the preachings of my father and what he believed in was something that I didn't dare do. So when the group came over and asked me, I said I would give it very serious thought and give me a few days and I will consider it. Within a week they had sort of a party gathering to endorse me. I went to that meeting and somebody nominated me, and I was ramrodded to be the gubernatorial candidate for the Popular Party. At that time I was going through some very, very bad experiences on my divorce and so I went to see Carlos. Carlos was the chairman of the Democratic Party and asked him to run instead of me and I would support him. He had reservations about running for governor and he didn't think he was going to win against Joeten, but I urged him to do so and I told him that I will throw my support to Carlos and so he accepted and I backed out.

Willens: Had Joeten already been selected by the Republican Party?

Sablan: Yes. So during the campaign I was going off-island. I appeared in Oleai, and Oleai was a stronghold for the Republican even today.

Willens: How do you spell that?

Sablan: Oleai, O-L-E-A-I, Oleai. And I supported for that one single night Carlos and Frank Ada, and then I took off the following day for two weeks. I came back after the election and found out that Carlos won the election, much to my surprise. Joeten lost. Joeten was the candidate for the Territorial Party. And the party of the ordinary won.

- Willens: I understand that there was some kind of a primary in the Democratic Party in which Dr. Camacho came in first and Senator Borja came in second. Senator Borja was very disappointed with this outcome and subsequently said he would make himself available to Joeten to run for Lt. Governor on the Republican ticket. Do you have any recollection of Oly switching parties at that time?
- Sablan: I was not aware of that. Again, because I had certain reservations about being actively involved. What I vividly remember was that I approached Carlos and Carlos accepted and went to the Party and the Party accepted Carlos.
- Willens: It was then up to Carlos, Dr. Camacho, to select his running mate, is that correct?
- Sablan: Right.
- Willens: I also understand that Frank Ada had been a serious candidate in the Republican Party for the gubernatorial position but that he didn't get as many votes as Joeten. Do you have any recollection of how it came to be that Frank Ada, who had run for the Territorial nomination for Governor, ended up on the Democratic ticket as a candidate for Lt. Governor?
- Sablan: Well again, I think it goes back to, I hate to use the terminology cronyism, but I think, you know, well, party is party. Frank probably felt it was an honor that someone recognized him. He was looking for recognition and the Popular Party recognized him, over Joeten. So that's probably the way he joined up with the Popular Party.
- Willens: How did you generally assess Mr. Ada in terms of his abilities and performance as a District Administrator?
- Sablan: Well, Frank Ada is a very intelligent man, and he was sort of a student of my father in politics. But Frank has some shortcomings when it comes to public relations. He just doesn't have it. And sometimes he makes an outburst.
- Willens: Are you recalling specific instances that took place when he was District Administrator?
- Sablan: Yes, it was very difficult to talk to Frank. He has a mind of his own, although he's very intelligent and one of the few guys that graduated from UH.
- Willens: Did Frank Ada's duties as District Administrator, where he had to implement the policies of the Trust Territory Administration, involve some difficulties in relating to the local community?
- Sablan: Well, he was appointed by the High Commissioner. It was not an elected position and therefore, of course, he would feel that his loyalties go to the appointer. It was really not a matter of whether you're popular with people or not. But when election came, that was something else. And I think that the party felt that among the candidates the Territorials were considering Joeten would have garnered the votes over Frank because Frank, to a certain extent and with all due respect to Frank (I like him and I have great respect for him), does have some aspects of an abrasive personality. If he has decided that this is it, he takes an uncompromising position and his mind is set; it's very difficult to alter.
- Willens: In your status as a businessman in the community in the late 1960s and early 1970s when Mr. Ada was District Administrator, did you find him receptive to the recommendations of the business community?
- Sablan: Mostly yes. In most cases he was receptive, although he was protective of his position, and he did not do anything that would jeopardize his position, in other words go against the system.

- Willens: I have seen actually very recently some documents suggesting that the district administrators in the Trust Territory as a whole were very protective of their positions and were not necessarily committed to rapid status negotiations. That may be unfair to the district administrators, and I'd like to hear any reactions you have to that suggestion.
- Sablan: Well, that's exactly right. Like I said, Frank was pretty protective. He was to carry out the mandate of the administering authority, and so he was on the other side of the fence, so to speak. While he listened and probably followed some the recommendations made by members of the Chamber or the business community, the fact still remains that he would not make any rash decisions that would jeopardize his position or the position of the administering authority.
- Willens: He tends to view himself as being an administrator rather than a political person. How was he in fact as a campaigner in the election of 1977?
- Sablan: Well, he's a very intelligent guy and he's a good speaker. Sometime I feel that what he says might be going over many people's heads at that point in time. But we were not that sophisticated anyway in politics in those days. And Frank was a political student from the U.S.
- Willens: Well, I don't know anyone who's read these materials or talked to the people out here who would say that you were not politically sophisticated. There are those who say you may have had too many people in government and too many politicians. But I understand that everyone assumed that the Republican ticket of Joeten and Oly Borja was going to win. And it was only near the end of the campaign when it looked as though the Camacho/Ada ticket had a chance. Do you remember what it was that seems to have turned the electorate around?
- Sablan: Well, ironically, about ten days or a week before the election was the day in which I stood up spoke in San Jose, because my dad had a house in San Jose and in Oleai and a lot of people blamed me for the loss of Joeten. A lot of people blamed me. And Joeten for eight years did not speak to me. Did not speak to me although we were at one point the closest, closer than my own brothers, in friendship. But because that night I stood up to keep my commitment to Carlos Camacho and Ada they said that was the turning point. And I spoke in Carolinian because I spoke Carolinian, I spoke Chamorro, and I sort of reminded everybody that I am the son of Elias P. Sablan who was the leader for many, many years and that when he speaks everybody sort of listened, you know, and so forth. I appealed to the public that they should support the person whom I believed would do a better job. I really don't, I cannot, claim that I was the turning point, although it's been alleged. Even from Joeten.
- Willens: Well, what did the votes in that district show?
- Sablan: Well, that was very Territorial.
- Willens: It was a strong Territorial district?
- Sablan: It was very strong. Except I think Joeten probably lost at District 1 which is predominately Popular. So I didn't think I had anything to do with it, although, you know, I'm being alleged to have caused it.
- Willens: People are always looking for an excuse of some kind. Did you believe, in fact, that Dr. Camacho and Frank Ada would do a better job as the first Governor and Lt. Governor?
- Sablan: Well, I leaned more towards Frank amongst all the four people running because Frank has been a District Administrator. And he knows the ins and outs of the government. As for

- Carlos, it was a commitment that I kept to support him because I wanted to get out of the partisan system. It is something I did not believe in.
- Willens: Well, stepping back now and looking at that first Administration that lasted four years, what do you think were its principal accomplishments and what do you think were its principal problems?
- Sablan: Well, there was more turmoil than anything else. I think the Commonwealth being in its infant stage confronted many problems, the fighting that went on between the Executive Branch, namely Carlos and Ada, against the party in the Legislature.
- Willens: The Legislature was controlled by the Territorial Party, is that correct?
- Sablan: That is correct. And so there was hardly anything that could be accomplished. There was some payless payday for the teachers and they went on strike. It was very difficult, I guess, you know none of us were well versed in leadership—political leadership—and that includes Carlos although he was a party chairman. Being a party chairman is like being the president of a club. And this is how I view the partisan system here in the CNMI.
- Willens: Do you recall any particular incidents with respect to the relationship between the Commonwealth and the federal government during that first Administration?
- Sablan: The political relationship? Not really.
- Willens: So your basic recollection today is that very little, if anything, was accomplished under the first Administration of the Commonwealth primarily because of the partisan division between the Executive Branch and the Legislative Branch.
- Sablan: That is correct. And partisan came above anything else in those days.
- Willens: And was that one of the principal factors then that resulted in the election in, I guess, 1981 of a Territorial/Republican victory?
- Sablan: That is correct. Besides you know the gubernatorial candidate at that time was well loved by the people. Pedro, Pete P. Tenorio. And I think that was sort of the turning point for the Republicans.
- Willens: How was that ticket put together, if you know?
- Sablan: It was a very well done—in that the party went through the democratic system. There was a lot of push and pull in those days as to who was going to run for Governor. I was one of them. And yet I decided, after making the assessment, that I was not going to win the election because I was hardly known and that was one of the ingredients necessary to win the election. There was Oly, myself, Pedro P. Tenorio. Oly, I guess, backed out before the primary. Excuse me, I backed out before the primary and supported, publicly supported Pete Tenorio and these two guys went right through primary and Olympio lost to Pete P. And Pete P. picked up Pete A. Oh there were four of us, Pete A., Olympio, Pete P. and myself.
- Willens: All four candidates for the Republican nomination.
- Sablan: Republican nomination. Right. And the three went and I backed out. I made an assessment on my own; I said if I can't win there's no sense in barking up the wrong tree so I pulled back. Besides I was deeply involved in business.
- Willens: You mentioned earlier that you did have an assignment in the Camacho/Ada Administration. Did I mishear you?
- Sablan: No, I did not.

- Willens: You didn't serve in any governmental capacity under that Administration?
- Sablan: No.
- Willens: Did you serve in a governmental capacity under the Republican Administration under Governor Tenorio?
- Sablan: Briefly.
- Willens: In what capacity?
- Sablan: I resigned from Microl in 1979 and became the economic advisor to the House for one year. And then the following year, Pete and Larry asked me to serve in the Senate in the same capacity. So I served them as the economic advisor, and I reviewed all the legislation relative to fiscal and economic matters.
- Willens: Was that a full time job?
- Sablan: Yes, and I was one of the highest paid employees they had there. And then when Pedro Tenorio decided to run, I was his political strategist.
- Willens: For the . . .
- Sablan: Territorial, Republican.
- Willens: The 1981 election for Governor.
- Sablan: Right. And I sort of steered the candidate to victory.
- Willens: Did you go into their Administration?
- Sablan: Yes, I was the inauguration chairman, then later became the Special Assistant for Planning and Budget for six months. And after I presented the budget to the U.S. Congress, I had to return to Microl because the guy that succeeded me quit the company on one day's notice. So I went back in June 1982 to Microl until I retired as the chairman of the board in 1987. So that was my involvement in the Administration.
- Willens: Were you involved at all in the negotiation of the second multi-year term of funding from the United States?
- Sablan: I was not. Not the second. The third I was.
- Willens: Stepping back then from this, I guess just to complete your government service, you did serve for three years in the current Administration in the planning office?
- Sablan: Yes. The same job I had in 1982.
- Willens: Could you tell me why you left that position?
- Sablan: Could I just backtrack a little bit? After I resigned from Microl as the chairman of the board, I retired actually and went to the States and established a trading company. When Larry ran and won, he wanted my oldest brother to assume that responsibility.
- Willens: Who's that?
- Sablan: Ignacio Sablan. Four years prior they both ran and lost in the primary.
- Willens: Who lost?
- Sablan: Larry and my brother.
- Willens: They ran in the primary . . .
- Sablan: For the Republican Party.

Willens: I see.

Sablan: They lost to Pedro P. for the second term of Pedro P. And so when Larry won in 1989 he asked my brother whether he would occupy that job, and my brother said, "No, I'm retired and I intend to stay out of government." And he said, "Well what about your younger brother, David?" At that time I was living in Modesto, California, and so they contacted me and offered me the job. I had an export company going on at that time and the only reason why I came back really is because my wife Rita didn't want to live in California anymore. So it was an opportunity for us to return and I came back New Year's Eve of 1990.

Willens: And you began work?

Sablan: I worked for them as a Special Assistant for Planning and Budget. I payrolled the budget for the government, presented it to both houses of the Legislature, as well as the U.S. Congress. I always accompanied the Governor back there. And also was involved in the third negotiation for the multi-year funding. So I resigned from the government in 1993, January 31.

Willens: And why did you resign?

Sablan: I resigned because there was a minor difference between the Governor and me on how the Commonwealth Utility Corporation should operate. There was a law passed in early 1992 to make the Special Assistant for Planning and Budget and Director of Finance permanent members of the board. And so I was serving in that capacity as a member of the board, but I did not necessarily care for the way the Executive Director was operating. He disregarded the budget process, disregarded the appropriations process. He was just spending money like it was going out of style. There's no financial management. And I tried to instill that financial management and yet my dear friend, the Governor, never supported me. Then there was a move to increase the rate, to sort of capture additional funds for the operation, and I said I could not bear this kind of stuff. In my opinion it was a very poorly managed, financially managed, corporation that today needs to be revamped. And so rather than fighting the system, I resigned.

Willens: Let us step back, David, and try to get your assessment of how well this experiment called the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands has worked over the past 15 years. First, what is your sense about the relationship between the federal government and the Commonwealth under the Covenant? Has it worked well? Have there been conflicts? Has the Covenant proved to be feasible? How would you evaluate the situation?

Sablan: My personal opinion that the Covenant is a good tool, a good instrument. I think the constant change on both sides, in the leadership on both sides, has resulted in differing opinions or interpretations of the Covenant. I think that there should only be one meaning of 807, 902, 702, whatever the sections are. I think that we should look into the committee report and the technical write-ups that support these various sections of the Covenant.

Willens: Do you have some specific controversy in mind?

Sablan: Yes. There has been some question as to the true political relation of the CNMI and the United States. There has been some concern that the United States is not living up to its side of the bargain. Some of the people here seem to feel that there is some meddling, U.S. meddling, in our internal affairs and that this so-called self-government is not self-government per se. And who is right? I don't know. But that appears to be the problem

that we're facing here today—the lack of true understanding of what was really negotiated then.

Willens: Well, do you think people on the United States side within the federal government are intruding on self-government here in the Commonwealth?

Sablan: I really don't know, Howard. Who am I to draw that conclusion? I think it's important that the history of the Covenant should be looked at. In other words, the write-ups, the committee reports, on how we arrived at these different sections ought to be looked at. For instance, there is a section in the Covenant about consultation, I think that's [Section] 902. The consultation is being construed by the United States as initially a consultation where, if we do not fully understand the contents of the Covenant, we go to the United States and ask them what that means and then live accordingly. Some of the people here construe it differently. We think that internal self-government means hands-off. We will abide by the U.S. Constitution but legislating our own affairs internally is our prerogative. Right or wrong, I don't know, because I was not a party to the negotiations, but this is one of the main areas of confrontation.

Willens: How about the current differences with respect to the amount of funding and the way in which the Commonwealth has dealt with some of its problems such as those relating to alien laborers?

Sablan: Right. Now let's talk about the funding. It is the position of the CNMI government and I state this because I served on the negotiating team for the third multi-year funding, that the language in the Covenant states that, and some of the references in the U.S. Code appropriations measure state that, the multi-year funding that the CNMI would get is mandatory in nature. And that there should be continuous funding as agreed to by both parties in the Covenant. The recent move by Miller to change that and take \$3 million and give it to the American Memorial Park here in the CNMI is probably construed by our leaders as wrong. That money, some people here feel, is a grant in aid, just like you would give it to a foreign country, and that there should be no strings attached. Once it is given to us, it is really up to us to use it. Other people feel that the Inspector General has the right to look over our shoulders. I agree with the latter—that any money we get from the United States ought to be scrutinized by the giver. Some people do not agree with that here. Now as far as the non-resident workers . . .

Willens: No, let's stay with funding for just a minute. There was an agreement reached with respect to \$120 million over seven years with a plan for the Commonwealth to assume an increasing share of funding the operation of the government. Do you agree with the general objective that the Commonwealth should strive toward self-sufficiency and that in order to do so it may have to increase its locally raised taxes?

Sablan: Agreed. First, the Congressional appearance that the Governor and I made at the 1993 budget hearings we made it clear to Congressman DeLugo that the money that we'll get from the United States for operations will no longer exist. In other words, it's down to zero. We cannot rely on the United States taxpayers to fund our operations. For capital development, we feel that \$120 million is an appropriate sum—the total amount that would derive from the contribution of the United States over seven years. The amount of money that the United States will kick in will ultimately translate into 50 percent of the total need. In other words it's inverted. First it's loaded and down to zero and vice versa. Based on that, we tentatively agreed that that was the way to go, only to find that when Miller got a hold of the whole package he was ticked off, I guess, by some of the internal things that are not happening here. And therefore he sort of began, excuse the expression,

rabble-rousing, to cut off funding. We maintain that this is the mandatory funding that the United States Congress should recognize.

Willens: You were going to say a few words about the alien labor, apparently.

Sablan: Yes, alien labor. Under the agreement, we were given the privilege to take care of our own internal affairs, including immigration and minimum wage. With no development whatsoever, we looked at ways in which we can develop our own economy and generate our own revenue to support our government. Unfortunately, I was not here from February 1987 to 1990, the beginning of 1990. I was in the States. During that time I noticed that the statistics on the influx of non-resident workers kept on going up. In 1986 it was like 11,000 people.

Willens: You're saying that while you were in the States you did notice that there was a very substantial increase in the number of alien laborers here and you were commenting on that factor.

Sablan: Well, the thing is that we have to sort of look after our own affairs in the process of growing our economy. Somehow the kind of development we were going into necessitated that large influx of non-resident workers. We were trying to take advantage of the Headnote 3A provision. I realize that the United States had accorded us this provision in the hope that we would create work for our own people. And because we were handling our own immigration, we had the better of both worlds. As a result of that, good or bad, we are where we are today. I think that this was a growing pain that we experienced. I know that some of the people in the United States do not like the way we are operating here, but there's something missing. An ingredient is missing here. I've not seen too many Americans running to the CNMI to invest. This is our problem.

Willens: Why is that?

Sablan: Number one, I think the distance has a lot to do with it. There's not enough incentive for an American to come and establish here. The only American company we have here today, 1993, is the Pacific Island Club, I mean of any meaningful size. The rest of them are either Chinese, Japanese or Korean.

Willens: And the Pacific Island Club is a hotel resort facility?

Sablan: Resort facility owned by an American living in San Francisco.

Willens: Let's try to generalize a bit, David. You were one of the active supporters as a U.S. citizen for the new political status between the Marianas and the United States back in the late 1960s and early 1970s. You and the others here have experienced this now for 15 years. Do you think on the whole the people are better off in the Commonwealth now than they would have been if they had selected some alternative status?

Sablan: Oh, definitely so. I wouldn't change it for all the tea in China.

Willens: There have obviously been difficulties along the lines that you've suggested. What have been the principal benefits that you would cite to support your judgment that it was a good decision?

Sablan: Good decision to enter into this Covenant arrangement?

Willens: And to become part of the United States.

Sablan: We got the better of both worlds, I think. Number one, the flag of the United States ensures the stability of our government. I mean we're stumbling, we know that. At least we know that we're stumbling and we're doing something about correcting it. We're not

the master of anything; we're still learning ways to improve our economy and the United States happens to accord us that privilege, in my opinion.

Willens: You have several other models that you can look at. There's Guam, there's the Republic of the Marshall Islands, there's Palau, and there's the Federated States. So when you look at those alternatives, do you see in them anything that you would rather have?

Sablan: I'm sorry to say I could not. I just returned from going through the Marshalls and Ponape, and while Ponape is the seat of the Federated States of Micronesia, there is very little, if any, development. Very little, if any. And today they're still 20 years behind the CNMI government. At least.

Willens: How about in the public services available to the ordinary people in terms of education, for example, and health? How are those services provided now, and do you think they've improved?

Sablan: Vastly improved. The United States has pumped in \$31 million into a sophisticated hospital. The amount of money that has been infused by the United States, I'm not downsizing the contribution of the United States Government to this island because if you really looked at it, it has gone into virtually billions. And as a result of that, we have been able to improve our infrastructure to lure investors. Unfortunately the investors that are coming here are people from the Orient and Japan. We would like to do something about inviting United States people, but somehow that is economically unfeasible. I was the chairman appointed by the Governor in 1984 to sort of beat the bush in the United States for foreign sales corporations. In two weeks I visited 21 cities. We told them, unfortunately at that time, we did not have the sophisticated phone system that we have, the good power, the good water, more hotel rooms and more apartments, so I was only referring to it as in the future. But if we really compare our growth for the short period of time and Guam, we're far ahead.

Willens: Why?

Sablan: Because the Covenant has accorded us flexibility enough to provide us these various amenities to move around in and to develop our economy.

Willens: How would you compare the quality of life here with the quality of life in Guam?

Sablan: Well, I lived in Guam for 18 years and since then I've been going down there a lot. But you see, the quality of life, I guess, they're more sophisticated. They've been under the United States since 1898. They've been under the Organic Act since 1950. They don't have the non-resident workers that we have here. These are the pluses for the economy of this island. In Guam, you can't bring in non-resident workers like we do here. Guam is controlled substantially, if not all, by the United States. In other words, the U.S. Congress, 10,000 miles away from Guam, can enact legislation that would affect the territory of Guam. I'm led to believe that we have some say so about what sort of legislation. I think that was spelled out in the Covenant. What laws may be made applicable, what laws may not be made applicable, what mutual understanding must we reach before anything can be enacted here. This is what I believe in and I think this puts us in an envious position.

Willens: What do you think are the two or three major challenges that the Commonwealth has to face now looking ahead for the next decade?

Sablan: I think there are a lot of internal things that need to be addressed. We have to legislate laws that would sort of clean house. Whether we like it or not, we must accommodate the United States' needs within reason. I think there are too many non-resident workers. I think we're living in a fool's economy. Any time there are more outsiders working for

the insiders, to me that's not healthy. Unreal. It's got to be pared down to a realistic size. We've got to find a way in which we can continue to lure development from the United States, and I don't know the answer to that. That's a tough one. Give them incentive. Give them tax-free benefits. Get General Motors and General Electric to use this place as a distribution point. Sort of a fall back position because we do have the United States flag flying. And these are the sort of things that we ought to convey to prospective investors in the United States. And quite frankly, the Guamanians are envious of our position. And I think that's what ticked off Miller. In that, in their quest for commonwealth south of us here in Guam, they sort of threw a rock at a sleeping wasp and they started thinking about geez, Saipan just newly joined the political family of the United States and they're a hell of a lot more advanced in the economy, they've got a better package. The Guamanians themselves are telling us that. You listen to the morning news in the morning on 570, the Jon Anderson show. They say that. And I'm not saying this, I just realized I'm not saying this because of you, I'm saying the real facts. I mean these are other people talking.

Willens: Well, that is one of the comments that people are going to make. If there are any criticisms of the status, people may be reluctant to express them to me. I don't think you might be reluctant but it's possible that others might be. I think we've basically reached the end of the interview. It's been enormously helpful and revealing for me and will be very useful. Do you have any last thoughts that you just want to make part of the record?

Sablan: Yes, there are a couple of things I'd really like to throw in. I'd really like to see more interaction between ourselves and people of the United States. I'd like to see more Americans making themselves residents of the CNMI. I'd like to see a change in the ethnic mix that we've got here, you know, to offset what we got. That's basically the message I'd like to convey. But I think that we are happy under the present arrangement. I know there are many people saying that if you really look at this consultation it means we can sit down with United States and renegotiate. They're going to run into trouble.

Willens: Who are the leaders with that position?

Sablan: I've heard some people from Rota say that. I think the underdogs are sort of saying that consultations section of the Covenant gives us an edge to sit across the United States and say let's renegotiate our political status. I don't believe that. I mean we're in for the long run. The Covenant is essentially the Covenant. Not a law that you can change overnight.

Willens: On that note, thank you very much, David. I'm sorry to have taken so long. It was terrific.