

## INTERVIEW OF MANUEL A. TENORIO

by Howard P. Willens

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- Willens: Manuel A. Tenorio was a delegate to the First Constitutional Convention and is currently a candidate for the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth Legislature. Mr. Tenorio, I appreciate your taking the time away from the campaign to help us develop the facts with the respect to the history of the Commonwealth. I might ask you as a starting point to give me a little personal background. Where were you born and educated?
- Tenorio: Thank you, Howard. It's a pleasure to be here today. My name is Manuel A. Tenorio. I was born here in Saipan on December 23, 1944. Actually, this is almost right after the World War II, so I'll be with the 50th anniversary of the Second World War. I started my education in Saipan way back in elementary school prior to the Trust Territory time. Then I graduated from high school and went on to a parochial school, Mount Carmel High School, the only parochial school in Saipan that goes to the 12th grade.
- Willens: You were going to high school during the 1950s then?
- Tenorio: Yes, about that time.
- Willens: And did you go on to further education?
- Tenorio: I actually graduated in 1964. So my high school years were in the early 1960s. I finished high school in 1964 and I attended a summer session in Guam at the College of Guam.
- Willens: It was then called the College of Guam?
- Tenorio: Yes, that's right.
- Willens: What did you study?
- Tenorio: Well, I was basically in the general academics. I went on to the University of Hawaii and that's where I took on agriculture as a career.
- Willens: What did you study there?
- Tenorio: Agriculture.
- Willens: Did you get a degree there in Hawaii?
- Tenorio: Yes. I got my bachelor of science in tropical agriculture back in 1968.
- Willens: Then did you come back to Saipan?
- Tenorio: After that, I actually came here to Saipan and started working for the Trust Territory government. I spent a year or so here and went back to the Marshalls. That's where I spent quite some time—a couple of years in the Marshalls.
- Willens: What was your job assignment in the Marshalls?
- Tenorio: Well, it's all in agriculture. I was what they called an extension supervisor then. I do a lot of extension work, agricultural work. Primarily replanting the atolls. So, I've been to almost all of the inhabited atolls. There are about 28-29 of them in the Marshalls.
- Willens: Is the Marshalls the district other than the Marianas that you know the best?
- Tenorio: Well, I've been throughout Micronesia. I spent some time in Ponape through the Agriculture Department, again representing the Agriculture Department of the Marshalls.

And I've been to all areas in Micronesia. I've been to Palau, I've been to Yap, Truk, and Ponape. The only areas that I haven't visited was like [Unclear] and the core area.

Willens: What's the name?

Tenorio: It's Kapinga Marangi. It's Polynesian. It's part of Ponape.

Willens: How many years did you work for the Trust Territory government?

Tenorio: Well, I actually worked for about three years. It's a short period of time. First of all, I spent about a year here in Saipan working as the Animal Industry Officer. Actually my background in agriculture was more toward the animal industry area. So I did work up here as an Animal Industry Officer for about . . .

Willens: An animal what?

Tenorio: Animal Industry Officer. For about a year.

Willens: And then you went out into the . . .

Tenorio: Into the Marshalls.

Willens: The Marshalls?

Tenorio: Yes. That's right.

Willens: And when did you stop working for the Trust Territory?

Tenorio: I quit working back in 1971.

Willens: 1971?

Tenorio: Yes. So I have been working for UMDA, that's the United Micronesia Development Association.

Willens: Since 1971?

Tenorio: Yes.

Willens: What did that organization consist of?

Tenorio: Well, UMDA is an organization that was established by a group of business people throughout Micronesia. The main emphasis of that business was the exportation and marketing of copra, which was the major product that was being produced here in Micronesia for marketing in Japan and Korea and Hong Kong. I did some work for them. I actually worked in the Marshalls for UMDA for about two to three years before I came here to Saipan to work for them here.

Willens: And you're still employed by that company?

Tenorio: No, I am not. I got out of that company back in about 1990, the early 1990s.

Willens: When did you first get involved in political matters?

Tenorio: Well, after I got back from the Marshalls I spent some time in Saipan. I ran for the 26th Municipal Council. I think it was back in 1976.

Willens: For the Saipan Municipal Council?

Tenorio: Yes, that's right.

Willens: And were you elected?

Tenorio: Yes, I got elected to that office.

- Willens: What party were you affiliated with?
- Tenorio: I was with the Republican Party at that time.
- Willens: Now, your family is very active politically?
- Tenorio: Well, my brother has been in the Congress of Micronesia, and he became Lt. Governor for two terms—a total of eight years. I would say yes.
- Willens: And then there came a time when you decided to run for the Constitutional Convention?
- Tenorio: That's right. This was right after the Saipan Municipal Council. I thought maybe, you know, it would be the First Constitutional Convention and I'd become very involved with the government, so I wanted to be part of it. I decided it was a good opportunity to get into the formation of the new government. I ran for that Convention back in 1976, I think.
- Willens: During 1975 and 1976, there were numerous legislative proposals presented to the Marianas District Legislature to authorize the Constitutional Convention. Many of these were vetoed by the Resident Commissioner, Mr. Canham, for one reason or another. Did you have any personal involvement in those legislative proposals?
- Tenorio: No, not that I can think of. No. I was still very active in business. Of course, we had the Municipal Council at that time but we were doing mostly local legislation. In those days you had the Marianas District Legislature that did most of the work with the Resident Commissioner. But in my capacity as a Municipal Council member, we were more involved with the local grassroots government.
- Willens: Did you participate in any selection process within the Republican Party to designate you as a candidate? Or was anyone free to run who wanted to run?
- Tenorio: We went through a selection process, of course, within the Party. So I was one of the candidates selected. As a matter of fact, I think we won because the motto at that time was "Protect the Marianas." I think we had almost a landslide. The Republican Party had a landslide.
- Willens: For the delegates.
- Tenorio: Yes, for the delegates.
- Willens: But, the election for the Constitutional Convention was supposed to be non-partisan, as I understand it. Why was that? Do you know?
- Tenorio: For the Constitutional Convention itself?
- Willens: The people who ran for the Constitutional Convention could not be identified as affiliated with a particular party.
- Tenorio: I think the First Constitutional Convention was partisan. You had people running from the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. The Second Constitutional Convention was still partisan, but they restricted legislators from running to be a delegate to the convention, if I remember correctly.
- Willens: The first Convention or the second?
- Tenorio: No, the second Convention. Matter of fact, if I remember correctly, I might be wrong.

- Willens: Well, my information is that the first Convention was supposed to be non-political, but in fact the candidates were listed by number and then the parties advertised the numbers of the individuals who were affiliated with that party.
- Tenorio: Yes, that's right. Yes.
- Willens: So it became very partisan.
- Tenorio: Partisan, that's true.
- Willens: Were there any differences between the parties as to what they hoped to accomplish in the Constitutional Convention?
- Tenorio: Well, I would think not. We're forging a new government and that's a byproduct of the Covenant. Fortunately, a lot of young graduates came into and participated in that Convention. But, as far as specific interests or campaign issues, I don't think there was much difference between the Republicans and the Democrats.
- Willens: What kind of issues?
- Tenorio: There were hardly any different positions. We were all there to try to form the new government and protect the interests of the people. Basically, that's the issue we ran on.
- Willens: You made the point that a lot of young people with college educations expressed an interest and were chosen to run. Was that a policy within the Republican Party to select people like yourself who had had some advanced education as candidates for the Convention?
- Tenorio: Well, that's the way things worked out, especially for Constitutional Convention delegates. They throw in the names of people who are interested in running and you have a candidate committee that reviews their qualifications. You don't have too much interference with the running of the Party. They just encouraged the people based on their qualifications or experience, because there were quite a few older men that participated in that convention.
- Willens: Were you selected to run, then, as a delegate by a Party committee? A nominating committee?
- Tenorio: If I recall correctly, yes we were.
- Willens: If somebody had wanted to run but had not been selected by the committee, could they have gotten on the ballot?
- Tenorio: They could have, yes.
- Willens: But they would not have been endorsed by the Party?
- Tenorio: By the Party, yes.
- Willens: Did some people do that?
- Tenorio: I believe so, because we ended up with 50 some odd people running for 25 seats. It's not 50. It's not 25/25. I believe it was 56 or some such number. So, if you wanted to run as an independent, I think some people went ahead and put their name on the ballot.
- Willens: The Popular Party, as I understand it, controlled the Legislature at the time and they had been the Party, more or less, in control for some time. How did it happen that the Territorial or Republican Party was so successful in electing the majority of the delegates to the convention?
- Tenorio: I think this is probably because a lot of the people who ran from the Republican Party were probably more qualified for this particular type of public assignment. It's not like

actually running for a position on the Municipal Council. It's a temporary assignment, for a short period of time, where the people themselves make the selection and try to get the best candidates in to represent their interests. So, I would say that's basically what happened. You had a lot of good qualified people that showed interest in this position but who, in later life, didn't ever run for public office.

Willens: You said who did or did not?

Tenorio: Who did not, because all they were interested in was getting to the Convention and do some work, help out with the system, help build the constitution. I would think that's basically it was just the people's choice.

Willens: People's choice?

Tenorio: Yes. From both sides, you know. Both Republican and Democrat.

Willens: Do you remember any dispute about who could vote in the election? Whether aliens could vote or Micronesians who lived in Saipan?

Tenorio: No, not that I can recall. I think all those people who had been voting in previous local elections for either the Second Municipal Council or Second Legislature were eligible to vote for the Constitutional Convention.

Willens: When did you first learn that the Constitutional Convention had to complete its work within 50 calendar days? Did you know that before you ran?

Tenorio: Yes, I did.

Willens: Do you know where that provision came from?

Tenorio: No, I don't. But I thought it was such a short time. I mean it took them a long time to do the Covenant. So perhaps that why people became more careful about whom they would support to run, to do a task like that. So, they selected some of, I guess, the better qualified people running at that time.

Willens: Do you think it was a matter of cost? That people wanted to reduce the cost of the Constitutional Convention so they limited the number of days that the Convention could operate?

Tenorio: Well, I guess cost is part of the factor, but I think that's not all. I don't know. I wasn't involved with the people who made that decision.

Willens: Now, some of the cost of the Convention was being met by the Office of Transitional Planning that your brother directed. Do you recall hearing any criticism, particularly from the Popular Party, about the role of that Office of Transitional Planning and the selection of the consultants?

Tenorio: No, not that I know of. Not prior to the constitution.

Willens: During the Convention, do you remember anything of that sort?

Tenorio: No, I don't.

Willens: As I understand it, there was a lottery drawn for places on the ballot. Do you remember what number you ended up being assigned?

Tenorio: No, come to think of it, I never even bothered.

Willens: You do not remember?

Tenorio: No, I don't.

- Willens: Some of the Territorial (or Republican) candidates had opposed the Covenant. For example, Felix Rabauliman. Do you think people who had opposed the Covenant were unsuccessful in running for the Convention because of their opposition to the Covenant? Was that a factor in the campaign?
- Tenorio: Well, that could be a factor. I mean, after all, they did pass the Covenant by a good margin. But it was primarily a question of personality, and the qualifications, of people running that determined whether they win or not.
- Willens: There was a lot of debate before the Convention about the need to have Carolinian representation in the Convention. Some of the bills that were proposed by the Legislature were vetoed by Canham because they did not guarantee that one or more Carolinian delegates would be in the Convention. As it happened, there were three Carolinian delegates in the Convention. Do you think that it was important to ensure Carolinian participation?
- Tenorio: I would think so, yes, because for some reason Carolinians in Saipan think that they're not properly represented. You can see this also in the political selection process even nowadays. In some precincts they have areas where they sort of assign a slot for Carolinian representation, but then it's really up to the Carolinians to decide if they want to pick up the slot or support a non-Carolinian for that position. Especially in the Republican Party, we try to be more accommodating to the needs of our Carolinian brothers and sisters.
- Willens: Do you think the Carolinians have a valid complaint with respect to discrimination in the Marianas?
- Tenorio: Personally, I don't see any discriminatory attitude or anything that you would compare with the racism in the United States. I don't feel that the Carolinians are being discriminated against.
- Willens: Did you have anything to do with the Pre-convention Committee and the establishment of the rules under which the Convention operated?
- Tenorio: No, I wasn't a part of that.
- Willens: How were the leaders of the Convention selected—the president, the several vice presidents, and so forth. Was there a party meeting of the Territorial delegates to decide that?
- Tenorio: You know, I don't recall any meeting. But based on the way the selection of the officers came out for the Convention, it seems like they had a clear party selection. The president being a Republican, as well as a majority of the Convention delegates.
- Willens: Well, as it happened, all of the officers of the Convention were Republicans. A Popular Party delegate was nominated for a vice-presidency and declined. We have heard that the Popular Party decided not to accept any office or position in the Convention because they thought it was dominated by the Republicans. Do you remember any discussion of that kind?
- Tenorio: No, I don't.
- Willens: Would you say that some of the delegates put politics aside and others did not? Would it be fair to say that you were basically there to do a job and you tried to do it as well as you could, but you weren't involved in the political maneuvering that went on?
- Tenorio: You know, they had a leadership in that Convention, but I was just a member of the Personal Rights and Natural Resources Committee. I thought I was just there to do my

job as a delegate. I don't know why many of the people felt like they had been left out or that. The Convention was dominated by Republicans definitely, because that's the way it turned out. Most of the officers turned out to be Republican. Still, I don't understand, because the Constitutional Convention was not meant to be a political thing. The voters just selected people to get in there and work with the constitution as a byproduct of the Covenant. I personally didn't feel very strongly about this was a Republican issue, this was a Democratic issue. To me, it's an issue that everybody should look at as the people's issue, not necessarily a partisan issue.

Willens: You served on the Personal Rights and Natural Resources Committees?

Tenorio: That's right. Yes.

Willens: And your chairman was Felipe Atalig?

Tenorio: Felipe Atalig. And I thought he was a Democrat.

Willens: A Democrat?

Tenorio: I thought so, yes, at that time.

Willens: And Dr. Palacios was the vice chairman?

Tenorio: Dr. Palacios, yes.

Willens: And he was a Republican.

Tenorio: Yes, a Republican.

Willens: Did you express an interest in that particular committee? Did you have any choice in what committee you were assigned to?

Tenorio: As a matter of fact, yes. I volunteered to be a member of that particular committee. I feel that's more my area of experience and training.

Willens: So, to the extent possible, people were assigned to the committee that they expressed interest in?

Tenorio: I would think so, yes.

Willens: In the course of your work on the committee, did you feel that the Covenant provisions had limited your scope of responsibility?

Tenorio: Well, in what sense? I don't understand. I feel like we went there to try to put sort of a final touch on the Covenant, putting it into the legal form and within a system of government like the constitution. Within the time limitations and trying to accomplish as much as you can, you just have to try your best to do things within the limited time. Other than that, I thought we were just interpreting the Covenant, trying to convert it into the constitution.

Willens: Did you make any delegate proposals yourself?

Tenorio: Yes, as a matter of fact, I did—several delegate proposals.

Willens: Do you think that the process for dealing with delegate proposals was fair?

Tenorio: I would think so. Yes.

Willens: You don't have any complaints about the way in which your proposals were evaluated?

Tenorio: No, I don't. I think it was pretty fair, like everybody else.

Willens: What were the big issues that came before your committee?

- Tenorio: One of the issues was the land alienation provision.
- Willens: You're a member of the committee that produced the famous article?
- Tenorio: Yes, that's right.
- Willens: You've probably been interviewed on that subject many times.
- Tenorio: No. As a matter of fact, I haven't been interviewed. I've listened to the arguments, and I read the papers.
- Willens: Most people make it clear that they don't have any complaints with Article 12 as it's written in the constitution. What people are debating about, they say, is the way it's been interpreted by the courts. But going back to your days as a Convention delegate, do you remember any specific issues with respect to land alienation that concerned the committee? For example, the definition of Marianas ancestry or the number of years for a long-term lease, things of that sort?
- Tenorio: What I recall vividly is that there was a big concern about the constitutionality of that particular provision. But you were very positive that it would stand up in court. So we say: "Well, there's Howard Willens, if anything goes wrong, we'll just go back to him." But we questioned that in the committee. We anticipated a lot of problems with the provisions. We thought maybe it was un-American or unconstitutional. But we were convinced that it was a provision that, for one thing, as I understand, was even suggested by the members of the U.S. delegation when they were negotiating the Covenant. You know, we have a lot of precedents and a lot of similar situations which we can use to support that provision.
- Willens: No one could be absolutely confident it would be upheld constitutionally, although, as you know, it now has been. But you basically had to implement what was in the Covenant in section 805.
- Tenorio: That's right. Yes.
- Willens: But you had to figure out certain specific matters that were not addressed by the Covenant. For example, how do you define the . . .
- Tenorio: The definition of "Northern Marianas descent."
- Willens: Exactly. What do you remember about that particular subject?
- Tenorio: Well, we discussed what would best accommodate the thinking of the people that did the Covenant on the issue of "Northern Marianas descent." I think we agreed that a person must have some kind of blood like Indians do. We tried to ask: are you a Chamorro or a Carolinian? You know, what makes you a Chamorro; what makes you a Carolinian?
- Willens: One of the interesting things about the definition is that even if you have 100 percent Chamorro blood, but you've lived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for all of your life, you're not eligible.
- Tenorio: That's right. You have to be residing here at the proper time.
- Willens: Some early year, I forget exactly what it was.
- Tenorio: I don't recall.
- Willens: But it was defined in terms of some early year, like 1950, so that it was possible that some people who have lived here and made a commitment to the community for decades would be qualified even if they didn't have any Chamorro or Carolinian blood. Do you remember that being a topic of discussion?



- Tenorio: Yes.
- Willens: Did that seem fair to you?
- Tenorio: Well, we tried to be accommodating. I mean, we had people who had been living in Saipan for a long period of time and we thought maybe that they have every right to be here as us, you know—to be citizens of this area when we have a change in government. So the committee decided that certain groups of people that had been residing here for a certain period of time should be included in the definition of Northern Marianas descent.
- Willens: One of the issues that came up during the second Convention also was the maximum term of a lease that was permissible under the constitution. As I recall, the first constitution came up with a 40-year limitation and the second convention increased that to 55. Do you recall any discussion about that and do you have any judgment as to why it was increased from 40 to 55 in the second convention?
- Tenorio: I wasn't in the Second Constitutional Convention but, like I said, in the First Constitutional Convention we thought that 40 years was a lifetime and that should define a long-term interest. But then, a big issue in the Second Constitutional Convention was the change relating to corporations. In the First Constitutional Convention you could lease up to 40 years, but a corporation must be owned by 51 percent Northern Marianas descent to be qualified as a Northern Marianas descent corporation so it can own land. At the Second Constitutional Convention the people thought, maybe after a couple of years of the constitution being tested, that businesses would feel more comfortable and increase investment here if the period was extended to 55 years. So the provision was amended to 55 years, but at the same time I think they required the ownership of the corporation to be 100 percent Northern Marianas descent. So it was like a trade-off.
- Willens: Do you remember whether there was any expert input in deciding how long a lease should be permitted, or was it ultimately just a matter of judgment by the delegates?
- Tenorio: I think this just came out to be a matter of judgment of the delegates, because people feel that 40 years is a life-time, you know. I mean, right now the life span keeps on expanding, but in those days 40 years, 50 years was a life-time. Really it's a couple of generations.
- Willens: What were the other issues that you remember coming before your committee of particular importance?
- Tenorio: Well, we discussed the submerged land issue and a lot on the preservation of natural resources.
- Willens: Was it your view that the Commonwealth had full authority over the submerged lands extending out from the shores of the Marianas Islands?
- Tenorio: I don't recall correctly the exact language. But I think we were talking about submerged land belonging to the CNMI up to, what, the normal six to eight miles.
- Willens: That applies to the States?
- Tenorio: That applies to the States. Yes. But, if I recall correctly, the people involved with the Covenant have been trying aggressively to get over and beyond that zone and go on the 200 mile limit—what do you call it
- Willens: Exclusive economic zone?
- Tenorio: EEZ, yes.
- Willens: Who have been the leaders in that movement?

- Tenorio: Borja, if I'm not mistaken, Senator Borja was a very strong advocate.
- Willens: O. T. Borja?
- Tenorio: O. T., yes. Even my brother, Pete, and some of the other people that have been in Congress, you know, believe that the U.S. law providing for a 200 mile limit was supposed to be regulated and enforced by the federal government. Under the Covenant, these waters would be taken care of by the federal government and the local government would control up to a 10 mile limit.
- Willens: It's a matter of interpreting the Covenant, isn't it?
- Tenorio: But I think the key here is that we believe our resources should go as far as the 200 miles, because we don't know what's out there and we should be given the benefit of the doubt. If you look at the Northern Marianas, there is hardly any land resource; it's all water and we should have more rights to our water rights than just the ten mile economic, what do you call it, economic zone.
- Willens: Are you aware of any plans to develop resources in the deep waters surrounding the Marianas Islands?
- Tenorio: Well, no, I am not aware of any plan, but, like I said, it's just a matter of time. The water has so many unknown resources, you never know. Nowadays, you could harness energy from using the depth of the water and the current and change in temperature, through all kinds of modern day technology. At a time when you don't know what's going on, you should try not to restrict yourself. You know, you try to get whatever you can, because in this day and age you never know when things that are taken for granted today are actually a future gold mine.
- Willens: An actual gold mine?
- Tenorio: Yes, so I don't know if you look at it as being selfish or anything like that, but I thought it's just a right that every individual should try to take if they can.
- Willens: Do you remember any particular discussion within your committee about the Bill of Rights and the individual rights that found their way into the constitution?
- Tenorio: Quite frankly, the personal rights provisions are just like they were copied from the U.S. Constitution. I don't remember any particular issue where we had to argue back and forth. We thought it's pretty cut and dried, you know, it's pretty well acceptable to everybody. They just used the Bill of Rights from the U.S. Constitution. There's one issue, though, on privacy that I think that we argued about. It involved the constitutionality of using, for instance, electronic technology to take pictures or, you know, to invade privacy. I remember that particularly because I was part of the discussion about what would happen, for instance, involving all this detective work and everything. Nowadays you never know. Technology is so fast that who knows, maybe you and I are talking here, but somebody's taping our conversation ten miles from us, you know, and hearing all our arguments. So that they can't use this material in court, we make it unconstitutional. What do you call that—electronic spying, I think that's what. Yes.
- Willens: Wasn't it only within the past year or two before the Convention that there were some disclosures that, or rumors, that the CIA was conducting electronic eavesdropping or spying on the islands? Do you remember any newspaper articles?
- Tenorio: You read that in the comic book back in those days, of course. But, we know better than that that electronics for instance has been a science that has just gone so fast and we want to make sure we're protected. And look at the clean air and then what, what

- do we have here now, the right to clean air. That's one of the things that we put into the constitution.
- Willens: There are some unusual provisions in the Bill of Rights.
- Tenorio: The reason is because, look at all the pollution going on. The right to clean air, clean water and we put that as part of the constitution.
- Willens: There also was a right that I may not be quoting accurately about to right to practice the traditional art of medicine.
- Tenorio: Yes. That was also a thing that Dr. Palacios proposed also. Yes.
- Willens: What did he have in mind by that?
- Tenorio: Well, I think its part of, if I recall correctly, we thought we have the right to retain our cultural medicines, this sort of thing. You know, you can practice because there are people in modern-day medicine that probably look at them as soothsayers and witches and warlock. But, the fact of the matter is that whatever they are, it works, you know.
- Willens: I'm going to be looking for one here shortly to clear my voice.
- Tenorio: So, I think we would try like we did to preserve some of the medicinal plants as cultural medicines and we try not to restrict the practice of traditional medicine. I think that, basically, is what we're after. And we don't want that—we want that as a constitutional right to practice, not necessarily witchcraft, but using—because after all even modern day medicine did come from roots and chemicals.
- Willens: Was there any dissent to that proposed right?
- Tenorio: Not at all. I don't think so. I thought that came out real good in the overall committee.
- Willens: At some point during the Constitutional Convention there were public hearings. There was a draft, as I recall, of the constitutional provisions put out for public comment. Do you have any recollection of what the principal issues were that came to light during those public hearings?
- Tenorio: No, I don't recall any strong objections by people coming out strongly against any particular provision of the constitution.
- Willens: Do you remember any debate about the size of the legislature and the legislature salaries?
- Tenorio: Yes, that was one of the hot debates. Oh, that's the time when we actually cut down the municipal government. We tried to do away with the municipal government, and there was a lot of debate with people in Tinian and Rota on why. So, they kept the mayor. But we thought we were over-represented already. In the first place, we used to have a unicameral legislature where you have 13 senators representing the entire islands of the Marianas, and then because of the Covenant, the negotiations between the islands, they came up with a bicameral legislature and that's double the number of representation.
- Willens: So it was up to the Convention to decide, what those houses are and what representation would be guaranteed the individual islands.
- Tenorio: Yes. But we did have a very serious discussion on whether or not we should have the municipal government and we said no because we're too big already.
- Willens: You mean government's too big?
- Tenorio: Yes, government's too big and any additions in any government agencies or what is a cost to the public. In the first place, we tried to cut down our costs by eliminating the

municipal government but, come to think of it, as a matter of fact, we totally eliminated that except for Rota and Tinian, and the Second Constitutional Convention they came back with the council and the mayor. But that was the intent to the First Constitutional Convention is to—we were still on that 26th Municipal Council but we thought we just get rid of the municipal government because we have the central government already. We're really over-represented.

Willens: Then there was a debate about what powers the mayor would have to administer the Commonwealth programs. Do you remember that, a debate about how much power the mayor should have to administer Commonwealth programs?

Tenorio: Yes, I do, and primarily it's the islands of Rota and Tinian where they want more. They feel they should have more power at the local level because of their situation and being away from the seat of government which is Capitol Hill, Saipan.

Willens: Do you have any personal friends on either of those islands?

Tenorio: Yes, I have some friends on Rota, even have some friends in the delegates themselves that were.

Willens: From Rota?

Tenorio: Yes, from Rota.

Willens: Did you have any idea that there was going to be a walk-out of the Rota and Tinian delegates over these issues near the end of the Convention

Tenorio: No, I never did and I was surprised that they reacted the way they did.

Willens: Did you think that their reaction was justified?

Tenorio: Here, again, my own personal opinion is that they have rights to their own opinion, but I think they should have gone with the majority of the delegation. I don't know. I feel that they just walked out on something; they ought to instead come in and try to protect their interests. They just walked out of the Convention.

Willens: Several of the Rota delegates did not walk out, though—Greg Calvo, Pete Atalig, David Atalig, Pete Dela Cruz. Did you know any of those individuals in particular?

Tenorio: I know all of them.

Willens: Did you know why they elected not to walk out?

Tenorio: I think they just make up their mind that it's not right for them to walk out. I mean, we're here to discuss the future of the government, actually form our government constitution, and that they decided this was the way. I think it's a personal decision and whether they're right or whether they're wrong is not for you or me to judge. To walk out or not, it's really up to them. I think they're convinced that they're doing it right.

Willens: One of the interesting things to speculate about is what would have happened if enough people had walked out so that there was no quorum, that the Convention would not have been able to complete its business. It would have had to start all over again some time the following year, and the Commonwealth government might have been deferred for some time. Isn't that right?

Tenorio: Yes, that's the scary part. But fortunately, enough people stayed to make the Convention work.

Willens: I think you're right. I think people ended up believing that it was a very personal decision and that there was a public service here in completing the work of the Convention, even

if some provisions of the draft constitution were not precisely what they would have preferred.

Tenorio: That's right.

Willens: It was a very difficult decision both for those who walked out and for those who decided to stay. Do you have any other recollections about the work of the convention that you'd like to share with me?

Tenorio: Well, I thought the delegates did a pretty good job in carrying over the intent of the Covenant, and I have to give credit especially to those people that negotiated the Covenant. I think they did a very good job.

Willens: How about the consultants that you worked with particularly? You were satisfied with the work that they did, present company excluded?

Tenorio: Yes. Well, I worked with Deanne and she was actually our attorney, then I forgot his name, another attorney there, but we got a pretty thorough knowledge of what we're supposed to do, and we got the right materials and the right timing and, of course, I don't know what we would have done if they had extended it another ten days or so. Maybe it would be just the same, but I think the people that are involved done their best in trying to interpret the Covenant or put the forms into perspective and get all of the people to work together.

Willens: Did you have any general recollection of the thousand pages of briefing papers that you got a week or so in advance of the convention? Did you read any of them?

Tenorio: I did. I tried to spend time to read, you know, before I went into the Convention, the pre-convention paperwork that you need to—briefing papers that you need to go through. I tried to go through all of them, not because there are so many areas on our part, on the natural resources and personal rights . . .

Willens: But once you knew what committee you were on, you could then concentrate on the briefing papers that related to your work.

Tenorio: To that particular area. Yes. Because basically, it would have been very difficult for us given the short period of time we had to work with. I mean you got enough work load on your back already with . . .

Willens: How long did you have between the time that you were elected and the beginning of the Convention?

Tenorio: You mean the time to

Willens: Yes, the time to prepare actually.

Tenorio: Yes, a couple of weeks.

Willens: 1,000 pages was quite intimidating

Tenorio: I would say so, yes.

Willens: To anybody and . . .

Tenorio: But I'll tell you, we have a very good staff that worked with us and they'd get the papers and the various committees report in order to, you know. Good timing. We get to review a lot of these things very thoroughly, and I'm very pleased with the people that I worked with also in the committee that I worked with. We got a couple of attorneys in there, local attorneys beside Deanne and the other staff. We have Steve and we have Ray Villagomez, who's a judge now. He was part of our committee.

- Willens: Was Judge Villagomez part of your committee?
- Tenorio: Yes.
- Willens: I'd forgotten that. Was he an active participant?
- Tenorio: Oh, yes, certainly, he was a young attorney then. Very active.
- Willens: I remember once or twice on the floor of the convention that he challenged me on one part or another just for the sheer fun of it.
- Tenorio: No, but this thing's basically on the land alienation provision I thought, you know, we always—we thought we were going to have problems, but nothing insurmountable. But I'm convinced we did a good job and I think it remains as such.
- Willens: How about the complaint now, and this is more of a Covenant problem than a constitutional problem, that the power that Rota and Tinian have in the upper house of the legislature creates a legislative stalemate, that it's very, very difficult to get anything enacted in the Commonwealth unless you have their full support.
- Tenorio: I think this is where politics comes in. This is where negotiations come in, and this is where people have got to have faith in one another. It's a given thing. We designed the Covenant and the Constitution and the body of the Legislature and you've just got to have the right people working together. I guess it's the same in the United States. This is where real politics come in. I mean, the guy wants to please his constituents down there, and here we are trying—so it's a give and take. I don't know how to break this, but we thought, I would feel like personally, because we have more people over here, that we are probably denying a lot of our people the rights that they should have.
- Willens: The Saipanese.
- Tenorio: Yes, because of the mere fact that we have more people here and as far as the policy is concerned on the Senate, it's just split, and it's very unfair for us if Tinian and Rota, for instance, get together.
- Willens: Do you think that there are major infrastructure needs or other programs that have not been put into place for Saipan?
- Tenorio: Plenty.
- Willens: Because of the power that Tinian and Rota have in the Senate?
- Tenorio: I would say yes.
- Willens: Can you give me an example or two?
- Tenorio: Well, there are a lot of roads now in this new homestead area. There are no lights in the new homesteads that they just opened.
- Willens: On which island?
- Tenorio: In Saipan. We have 500 homes for instance in Koblerville, in Dandan, now in Kagman1 and Kagman2, you know. And we could have used some money to put up the infrastructure in those areas—telephone poles and water.
- Willens: Is there infrastructure there now?
- Tenorio: Very few, if any, but there are people staying there already, you see. And that's basically the problem and Rota, they get more than enough right now with their portion of the Covenant funding, their portion of the money they should get. Like now, like I said, it's

pure politics. People here can only work with the Rota senators or the Tinian senators and try to get things done on a need basis rather than by rights we own that.

Willens: By right to what?

Tenorio: By rights because of their share of the Covenant money or whatever.

Willens: Are you running against an incumbent in this election?

Tenorio: In this election, yes, because I am among six candidates actually in our Precinct 1. We have one incumbent in our Party, the Republican, the rest are all new.

Willens: How many people are elected from Precinct 1?

Tenorio: Six.

Willens: And so there are six Republican candidates?

Tenorio: There are six Republican candidates. There are six Democrats and there are four independent. So there is a total of 16 candidates for six seats.

Willens: And only one is an incumbent?

Tenorio: No, there are more than one incumbent. There are four incumbents all together on the lower house because one moved up to run for the Washington Representative. And, of course, Villagomez is running for the Senate, not for the House. He's an incumbent but not running for the same seat. So, I will be running against one on our side, one independent, and two from the other side.

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

Tenorio: For Saipan? For this election here?

Willens: Yes.

Tenorio: I think the real issue is the economy.

Willens: The economy?

Tenorio: Yes. The real issue is the economy.

Willens: Do you think that the general perception is that the economy has declined, or at least has not continued its growth, and so people are worried about their economic prospects?

Tenorio: We are. The economy is in a decline, as you said, and people worry about maintaining their jobs and less and less economic activity is going on. Japan's economy has not been the best, you know. I mean, it has gone down substantially. We're really affected by that.

Willens: The Republican Party has been in control of the Executive Branch for 12 years. Do you think there's some force for change of any kind that might help the Democratic Party next time around?

Tenorio: Well, they're making, like I said, the big issue now is the economy, so they're blaming everything on the 12 years of Republican Party administration. So, what can you do? Our economy here is very superficial. Everything is dependent on outside influences and we have only our resources for tourism. That's about all that we have.

Willens: For what? Tourism?

Tenorio: For tourism, yes. I guess some people, some economists, would consider that a form of export. We export clean air and nice beaches, sun and—but, I don't know. I just hope things get better and we have no control on this huge global recession. I mean, you've got

wars all over the world. We've got no control of that. So, I don't know what to blame. I can't blame the Republican Party for the economy being like what it is today or blame Article 12 for that matter. A lot of people think it. But I think that's wrong. What can you do? You try to maybe cut cost in government. Cut all the nonsense and don't use too much gas and turn the lights off and get people to work more efficiently. Save money. There's two ways of doing that: cut costs and raise revenue.

Willens: That's sounds like a very basic program.

Tenorio: Very basic. Very basic. You're absolutely right. I kept saying it. It's back to basics. I mean, people are forgetting their basic things. They're trying to jump and try to grab those things up in the air while they still have a lot of cleaning to do down there. It's back to basic politics. It's back to basic government. That's the way I look at it.

Willens: On that political note, we will bring this interview to a conclusion, and I thank you very much.