

## INTERVIEW OF PEDRO A. TENORIO

by Howard P. Willens

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- Willens: Pedro A. Tenorio was Lieutenant Governor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands for eight years. He served as a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission and as the head of the transitional operation leading to the establishment of the Commonwealth. He has been kind enough to agree to be interviewed in connection with this project. Pete, if I may call you that, I appreciate your taking the time to be interviewed today. I wonder if you could give me a little background with respect to your growing up and education in the Northern Marianas.
- Tenorio: Thanks, Howard. Of course, it is always nice to visit with you and especially to reflect on the history of political development here—in which you were one of the most critical persons involved by helping the Political Status Commission. Let me go back to the education part. As you know, I guess most of us, most of the people that you knew, actually went out from Saipan to be educated, and I was one of them. At the time I graduated from the ninth grade, there was no high school here higher than ninth grade. So I went as a scholarship student to Truk Island.
- Willens: Is that where you did your high school—in Truk?
- Tenorio: I attended one year of high school there. It was a very useful experience for me because that was the time when I met a lot of the future leaders of Micronesia.
- Willens: Who were some of them?
- Tenorio: Some of them were Amata Kabua, Andon Amarich, Nick Bossi, Bailey Olter, you name it, Eishi from Ponape.
- Willens: How do you spell his name?
- Tenorio: Eishi. He was also a member of the Councilman Commission. I met, like I said, a number of key students at that time; they were my classmates.
- Willens: Was that in the 1960s?
- Tenorio: I graduated in 1957 from intermediate school. I went there for one year. I attended a school called the Pacific Islands Central School. That was the central high school for all the Micronesians at that time, other than Xavier, which is also located in Truk. But for public school students, all the high school students from the islands of Palau, Marshalls, Ponape, Truk and Yap, actually most of them went to PICS, the acronym for the Pacific Islands Central School.
- Willens: Some of the people I've talked to did their high school in Guam at George Washington High School.
- Tenorio: Yes, that's right. That's after graduation from PICS or maybe one or two years attendance. PICS was a three year high school, 10 to 12. But I did not attend the full three years. I just attended one year and afterwards I went to Guam and I attended high school. At that time, because Saipan was still under the U.S. Navy, the only way I could attend a school there was to get a sponsor. I was lucky enough to meet a family, an Air Force family by the name of Carroll. Joe Carroll was the base commander for Andersen Air Force Base.
- Willens: How do you spell his last name?

- Tenorio: Carroll. He's retired now. They took me to their home and put me through school, essentially sponsored me as a student from Saipan, and then they let me stay there for two years. I attended Truman Junior/Senior High School in 1959, I believe, and then I went to attend George Washington High School, which was the central high school for Guam. No, I take it back, I think it was George Washington first in 1959 and then in 1960 I attended junior/senior high school. Truman Junior/Senior High School was the newest high school then. So I graduated from that school. It was my alma mater. Now it's called John F. Kennedy High School.
- Willens: I see. Were you born on Saipan?
- Tenorio: Yes, I was born on Saipan.
- Willens: Were your parents both born here?
- Tenorio: Yes, all my relatives and friends from here.
- Willens: Is the Tenorio family one of the largest families on the island?
- Tenorio: Extended-wise, yes. Extended family because of marriage with other families. It's one of the larger families. Maybe 4th, maybe 5th, you know, after the Camachos and the Sablans and the Cabreras.
- Willens: I see.
- Tenorio: But as far as the extended family now, it's probably number three.
- Willens: Where did you go to school then after you graduated from high school?
- Tenorio: Well, after high school I attended the College of Guam for one year, to get a good orientation of college life before going to the University of Hawaii, where I graduated in 1965.
- Willens: What did you study at the University?
- Tenorio: At that time it was earth science. I studied geology. I got my bachelor's in geology in 1965, and then I came back to Saipan and I worked as a high school teacher for one year. Then I decided, you know, there's not enough education here because to teach over here you need to be a little bit more specialized and have some advanced training. You have to be an expert in a lot of areas, so I decided to go back to graduate school. I went back in 1966, 1967. I got a grant from the East-West Center, a State Department program, as you know, in Hawaii. I attended two years of post-graduate work over there. I got my master's in hydrology.
- Willens: What is hydrology?
- Tenorio: Hydrology is a specialized study in water resources, water exploration, and water conservation. It encompasses quite a bit of an engineering discipline as well. It's hydraulics, it's geology, it's engineering—it's all mixed up.
- Willens: Some of the people who went to the East-West Center would spend a year of the two year program abroad. Did your two years involve specialization in any foreign country?
- Tenorio: Yes, the foreign country I went to was the United States. I went to a summer program at the University of Wyoming, where I did field work in my area, geology. So at the University of Wyoming I went out in the field and spent three months in a summer camp, a winter camp really. It's a nice camp. So we went out down to the prairies and I looked for dinosaur deposits and all kinds of fossils. I studied geology and paleontology while I was

going to school. I managed also to travel around the United States under the East-West Center grant.

Willens: Was that your first time to the United States?

Tenorio: Yes, I believe that was the first time to come to the United States outside of Hawaii. I managed to take a cultural trip. I stayed in hostels and in YMCAs in two or three places. I was in New York, to Buffalo, and then to Washington, D.C., where I stayed in a YMCA. I met some other students who were also traveling under different programs.

Willens: Just stepping back from the educational experiences that you've described, do you have any recollection today of your becoming aware of the political status issue during the 1960s?

Tenorio: I kind of kept track of it but not very much. I was more interested in trying to get an education. In fact, at that time communication wasn't very good between Saipan and Honolulu. There were not even any newspapers at that time, so a lot of the time whatever political information I got was through word of mouth or by letters. There wasn't much information dissemination at that time, when I was going to college.

Willens: Were you aware, for example, during the early and middle 1960s that the United States had adopted a new set of policies for the Trust Territory looking to make it more developed and part of the United States?

Tenorio: Yes, definitely, definitely. You know you read some of these things and somehow news articles reached Hawaii regarding the political development of the CNMI and Micronesia as a whole. During that period I was aware of some kind of U.S. effort to modernize (Americanize) Micronesia. There was a very famous article or series of articles about the Americanization of Micronesia a long time ago. I forgot who wrote it. It's a useful document to look at because it indicated a very direct effort by the U.S. to Americanize Micronesia even to the extent of sending out Peace Corps volunteers to help the islanders develop politically. Of course, the aim there was to adopt the so-called American system. Somehow it helped, I guess, throughout Micronesia, but the most visible impact of that particular educational process was the Northern Marianas.

Willens: What was your reaction to that overall United States effort?

Tenorio: I thought it was good. I am looking at the Charter of the United Nations and U.S. obligations under the Trusteeship Agreement. The U.S. in a way was obligated to extend all kinds of economic, political, and educational assistance to the people. Of course, eventually to guide them towards self-government or independence which is really the objective of the Trusteeship Agreement. At that time, of course, there were suspicions about what is the real genuine interest of the United States. Was it to brainwash everybody out here so that they would all become Americans and therefore enable the U.S. to control all of Micronesia as a strategic trust permanently? By virtue of the islanders deciding to be part of America, it was that particular issue that I was aware of. Of course, there was also the Solomon Report that pinpointed the U.S. effort to get the people out here to adopt the American system. I think there was quite a bit of defense interest at that time. I'll say there was an effort to provide education and political development to the Micronesians, but that was a secondary purpose at that time. It was primarily the defense needs of the U.S. that prompted a lot of this effort in the past.

Willens: Did you feel that the people from the other districts that you met had somewhat different reactions to the overall United States effort?

- Tenorio: Oh, yes, there's no question about that. A long time ago there had been talk about integrating the Micronesians with the U.S. But the other districts were much more traditional. It showed up very succinctly during the time we were negotiating our political status and during the time when the Congress of Micronesia actually rejected commonwealth and instead wanted to go on their own. They wanted to be independent. I think a lot of that had to do with their so-called traditional mentality of wanting to be on their own as they were a long time ago. A lot more independent in terms of having somebody else take over their so-called government.
- Willens: You mentioned that you had the experience of at least one year in Truk where you met individuals of your age from the other districts. Did you find that there was more in common that you shared with those individuals, or were there more differences that you think lead people in different directions?
- Tenorio: To be very frank about it, I found that there was so much more in common between the Micronesians, because they were brought together almost as a matter of practical reality then. We were brought into high schools together for example. We interact in many different ways together and that long interaction, that long identification as a Trust Territory person, actually got embedded very deeply into my mind and the minds of a lot of my colleagues and friends in Micronesia. I was very attached to the Micronesians. I have a lot of friends over there. I made a lot of friends and even now that friendship still persists. So there was a tremendous amount of affinity because of the fact that we are Micronesians, and we are under the Trust Territory so we have to stick together. My early impression, a very, very strong impression, was that you know "let's be together with these people". We sing the Micronesian anthem, for example, we share United Nations celebrations, we share the same food, and we weren't any different. What things have changed, you know, the spirit of being together was so strong.
- Willens: You got that very strong feeling in the 1960s?
- Tenorio: In fact, I had it even after that. As you know, I was one of the guys that actually resisted this whole thing about commonwealth. I truly believed in this idea of unity at the time, after knowing people, going to school with them, not only to PICS and high school in Guam, but even to the University of Hawaii. A lot of my classmates graduated from there. Lazarus Salii, John Mangefel, all those guys who became Congress of Micronesia members, senators and congressmen. They were my classmates. Even after PICS I was one of the guys who wanted very much to maintain the Micronesian identity and try to work things out. But you know what happened afterwards. The tide that swept away that so-called traditional affinity among Micronesians was the formation of political parties in the Northern Marianas.
- Willens: Well, I want to come to that; that's an interesting observation. You made reference to the Solomon Report, which I know over time has assumed an aura and reputation of being a very controversial report. Did you personally meet any of the members of the Solomon group that came to Micronesia in 1963?
- Tenorio: No. In 1963 I was still in University of Hawaii. But I remember being interviewed by the Voice of America people. I don't know whether they were part of that at that time, but I remember being coached to say nice things about the United States, and I did.
- Willens: Well was it your impression that the Solomon group came to Micronesia with some fixed objective in mind?
- Tenorio: I think so.

- Willens: Well, what do you think it was?
- Tenorio: Well, to Americanize Micronesia basically.
- Willens: Well, you could not expect a committee to do that. Is it your sense that they came with that bias and they produced a report that led to that program or policy?
- Tenorio: Probably, I'm not so sure, you know, it is hard. Like I said, I heard about this thing and I figured the effort is probably to try and get us together and get us to lean more toward the U.S. system.
- Willens: It was in the same year 1963 that the Marianas District formed its own District Legislature. That happened as a result, I gather, of the administration being turned over from the Navy to Interior and the other districts all had their legislatures and so there was a decision to create a legislature here. Were there political parties in place at the time of the first election to the Marianas District Legislature?
- Tenorio: Maybe Ben Santos probably and Frank Ada, but no more. If I remember correctly we had some kind of a party at that time. I came into the picture later on but I think that was in 1963 during the first Marianas District Legislature election. I think that was the time when the people kind of took sides and set up parties, like the Popular Party.
- Willens: And there was a Territorial Party.
- Tenorio: The Territorial Party was called the Progressive Party at that time.
- Willens: That's right.
- Tenorio: Then it became the Territorial Party afterwards, but the Popular Party continued on with its name throughout. I wasn't here but I remembered that during that election there were all kinds of rivalries. I think that was the time when the consciousness of the difference in political belief started to surface and there was that confrontation between the two sides.
- Willens: I gather that you think there were disadvantages as well as advantages to that development of political parties here?
- Tenorio: Well, some people were actually very perceptive at that time. They looked at U.S. history and the political process in the U.S. and they kind of adopted that—to have two sides. We just can't avoid it, the formation of the two parties had to be done anyhow. It created quite a problem among family members in the very closely knit society here, where people started expressing differences or to be less friendly to each other because they have different political beliefs. In a way it is a disadvantage. It created animosity among our own people and even among own family. In my family, my father's side and my mother's side were two different sides.
- Willens: I understand that one of the principal issues in the early 1960s was whether to seek reunification with Guam on the one hand, or seek a direct relationship with the United States on the other. The two parties took different positions on that issue but they were, as I understand it, united generally in the desire to have a close relationship with the United States. Is that correct?
- Tenorio: That's correct. That's absolutely right. Both parties want to be a part of the United States. It's how to be a part of it that is different between the two parties. As you probably know, the Popular Party, which was the majority party, actually wanted to be a part of America, part of the United States through integration with Guam. The Territorial Party at that time actually did not want to challenge that particular concept, but they were more interested in saying, "Well, we'll go along with that, but we have our own idea", and try to

appease the minority group over here. A lot of the minority group at that time were part of the Territorial Party. They weren't entirely opposed to integration until the time came for a decision to be made. But they said at that time that it's almost impossible to have a direct affiliation with the United States. They kind of admitted that reality at that time, so they're saying that it's okay to be part of Guam. But we wanted to create a new avenue. A new conduit, so that it's difficult for the Popular Party to achieve that integration with Guam.

Willens: Were there any other political issues other than status that separated the two parties?

Tenorio: Well, I think there were two, although not really major ones. The Territorial Party was identified as a party of the well-to-do, the rich and educated people, and also as a party that associated very closely with the Carolinian minority here. The Popular Party identified themselves as the party of the poor and the party that is striving to improve the island through their own ideas. There was that distinct identification at that time. Of course, the issue came up from the other side, not from the Territorial Party, it just so happened that's the way it was.

Willens: How did it happen that the Carolinian community found its principal political voice through the Territorial Party rather than the Popular Party since, as I understand it and I may be wrong, the Carolinian community on the whole is not as well off as many in the Chamorro community?

Tenorio: True. What happened was the founders of the Progressive Party were key people in the Carolinian community. One of them, of course, was the father of David Sablan, Elias Sablan. Elias Sablan was full-blooded Carolinian or 3/4 Carolinian and his wife was also full-blooded Carolinian. So he was regarded as the leader of the Carolinian community at that time. All of the traditional leaders of Dr. Palacios' family, for example, the traditional leaders of the Carolinian community, are identified because they started early representing their own constituency. They got up the ladder to the point where Mr. Elias Sablan, for example, became the Mayor of Saipan for a long time.

Willens: When did you first become involved in politics yourself?

Tenorio: Let's see. I got back here after graduation from the University of Hawaii in 1970. I spent two years working as a hydrologist for the Trust Territory government. I went around the districts looking for water. I got involved when I ran as an independent candidate under the group called Concerned Citizens in 1972, I believe.

Willens: And you ran for the Congress of Micronesia?

Tenorio: Yes, I did. I ran for the Congress of Micronesia as an independent candidate in 1972.

Willens: Were you affiliated with the Popular Party at the time?

Tenorio: No, I was not. Let me see what happened. I got invited by the Popular Party to join them. I don't know whether I should mention names here to get that history straightened out. You might want to use it or you may not want to.

Willens: No, I'd like to hear it.

Tenorio: Ok. What happened was that I was approached by a number of people that you know very well—Ed Pangelinan, Herman Guerrero, Ben Santos, Felipe Atalig—these were the key people in the Congress of Micronesia. When I came back from school they continued to ask me to join their party because my mother's side were very strong Popular Party members. So they figured well, why don't we get one of their family to join. I was basically very naive about politics. I didn't want to go into it. They kept calling me to join and run

in the 1972 election. So I said, "Well, the only way I can run is for you guys to endorse me." So I went to Palau and all over the place and they kept calling me, they wanted me to be part of it. So I said, "Well, if that's what you want I'll join." So I talked to my family and they said why don't you run as a senator. At that time Senator Borja was running for reelection on the other side.

Willens: But he was preparing to switch, was he not?

Tenorio: Well, let me get to the point. He noticed that if I ran against him and he was the Territorial Party candidate at that time, he would lose. He sensed this because the Popular Party was very strong. So what happened was that the leadership of the Popular Party turned around. At the last minute of the convention all of the guys that made a commitment to me two years ago turned their back on me because they were afraid of the mayor. The only guys (and let me list them for the benefit of history) that stayed with their commitment to support me as a candidate for the Popular Party were Mitch Pangelinan, Juan Cabrera (who was a member of the Political Status Commission), Felipe Salas, Frank Diaz, and Sandy Magofna. These were the five people that stuck with me. The friends that I had who were most effective in persuading me to join the Popular Party abandoned me, Ed Pangelinan was one, Herman Guerrero, Ben Santos, Felipe Atalig, Carlos Shoda, the mayor. The former Mayor Sablan would not commit anything at all to me because he wanted to play neutral and he was the president of the party. So what happened was Oly [Borja] (this was the time when he was having a session in Ponape) ran over here before the convention and he mentioned that his name was on the ballot. So you know at the last minute his name got in. I was endorsed by the party already. I was going to run as a candidate against Oly, but then Oly switched parties. He went to the Popular Party, and talked to his friends, the mayor, Ben Santos, and Ed Pangelinan. You know they're buddy-buddy because they were together for a long time. So they kind of stabbed me in the back.

Willens: You decided to run as an independent then?

Tenorio: Right. I said I'm going to test myself. I'm going to see how many people believe in education, believe in something that I have to say to them. So that's the beginning of my political career really. I ran. I knew I wasn't going to win, but I sure gave them a real scare.

Willens: Do you remember roughly what the result was of the three-way campaign?

Tenorio: I think I got about almost 700 votes and at that time to run as an independent you get maybe 20, 30 votes from your family.

Willens: Was there any precedent for running as an independent up to that point?

Tenorio: No, I don't think so.

Willens: Were you one of the first that you remember?

Tenorio: I was one of the first. Because this was for a major public office, a Congress of Micronesia Senator. And so I ran. I said well, I didn't appreciate what this guy did to me, but I just want to test myself. I was beginning to get interested because I could see the momentum of change already coming into play, the political thinking, the initiative to go into the American system, the commonwealth negotiations. These beginnings prompted my consciousness about getting involved, "You're going to be around here, for God's sake, get involved and do something about it".

- Willens: You say you came back from the University of Hawaii in about 1970 and worked for the TTPI government for about two years. It was during that two year period when the longstanding desire of the Marianas to have separate negotiations with the United States ultimately was agreed to by the United States. Did you have any impression during that time of the way in which the Joint Committee of the Congress of Micronesia was conducting its negotiations with the United States?
- Tenorio: Like I said, I started reading and listening to what's happening. I guess at that time my own personal feeling was that the Joint Committee really didn't know what they wanted.
- Willens: What was your assessment of Lazarus Salii?
- Tenorio: I think it was in 1974 when he became very important. At that time it appeared that the Joint Committee on Future Status actually had made up its mind not to accept commonwealth offer of the United States.
- Willens: There was an offer called the Commonwealth Proposal made by the United States in 1970 that was rejected by the Micronesian delegation. That position was affirmed by the Congress of Micronesia, which adopted its Four Principles that were directed toward a free association status.
- Tenorio: I was already in the Congress of Micronesia at that time. I got elected in 1974. I'm aware of that.
- Willens: You don't have any recollection of an earlier proposal?
- Tenorio: Not very much. My impression at that time was that the Micronesians wanted to be together. This was one of the strong signals I got. They wanted to be together regardless of what the CNMI wanted. Like I said before, the relationships that developed among the Micronesians from different districts actually started to cement over the years leading up to the Congress of Micronesia. That's why we were members of the Congress of Micronesia.
- Willens: Do you think the Congress of Micronesia played a constructive role in creating some sense of national unity among the Micronesians?
- Tenorio: No, not too much. The reason is simply this. Two things. One, there was a lot of feeling, for example from the CNMI, that we're just being taken along for the ride. We were generating more revenue than three or four districts combined. Yet when they parcel out the revenue for appropriations and other projects, we basically have to beg and get a miniscule amount compared with our contribution, because it's all based on population.
- Willens: Would you say the disagreement about revenue sharing was one of the major issues dividing the districts?
- Tenorio: That was one.
- Willens: What were any others?
- Tenorio: The others were the political beliefs—the ability to pursue whatever any group, any political entity, wants. That is, if they want to be a freely associated state, we expect them to respect the CNMI's desire to be a part of America through integration with Guam or separate negotiations. That I think was really the driving force underlying the ultimate political desire. When I was in the Congress of Micronesia I sensed that they had pretty much given up on the Northern Marianas coming back in. I tried what I could. I tried to persuade people, but you know the attitude of the people here. Although I was elected by the Territorial Party, which at that time actually wanted to be together with Micronesia, I

could see the winds of change blowing quite strongly. So that in effect influenced my own thinking on what you do. I said that when I got into politics I wanted to make sure that, if there is going to be change in the CNMI, I want to get in there and get wet.

Willens: Even before you became a member of the Congress of Micronesia as I recall, there was some evidence in the Marshalls and in Palau of the possibility of separate relationships with the United States. Did you think those separatist movements in the Marshalls and Palau were legitimate, or were they tactical bargaining maneuvers if I could characterize them that way.

Tenorio: I think they were legitimate, and the reason why I say this is because I knew the architect of that movement, especially in the Marshall Islands.

Willens: And who was that?

Tenorio: Amata Kabua. I knew him and he is a very close family friend; his niece is married to my brother. At the time we were actually the closest of friends in the Congress of Micronesia; he was my senior advisor.

Willens: How would you characterize him as a person or as a leader?

Tenorio: He is very smart. He has a very strong, very good perception of what's happening. We shared things like, "You tell me, Pete, you go ahead and do what you think is right. If you folks want to be part of America, you got my blessing." He would share this with me. His own sense was that why try to put a puzzle together that cannot be solved.

Willens: What?

Tenorio: And the puzzle is unity among Micronesians.

Willens: That's a very graphic way to describe it.

Tenorio: There were so, so many concerns, so many unexpressed inhibitions regarding political unity. Micronesians are very polite; they don't want to say critical or controversial things because it's untraditional and insulting. But Amata Kabua was one guy that I will never forget; he said, "Whatever you think is right, if you guys want to be part of it, I will support you."

Willens: Was he someone that you think could have brought the other five districts together?

Tenorio: It's very possible that if he had taken the initiative and been the so-called mastermind for political unity among Micronesians, he would have been a very effective person. He wasn't really that interested, he wasn't pushing.

Willens: But weren't there some Marshall Islands concerns of a financial nature that were very similar to those that you associate with the Northern Marianas?

Tenorio: Yes, there was that concern. But I think the strongest concern coming from Amata Kabua was that he also wanted independence. He wants to be like Nauru.

Willens: He wanted . . .

Tenorio: Like Nauru. Nauru is a small island, with less population than the Marshall Islands. Of course, to them the pride of having your own government—your own ministers, your own president—is worth much more than having the financial resources offered from the United States. To me that becomes what you call the real interest of being on your own and having a nation. He was a nation builder who wanted to be the person to build a nation of the Marshall Islands. This is his driving motivation regardless of the other sacrifices, such as closeness with the U.S. Of course, he knows that he is going to get

some benefits from responding to the U.S. military needs, but that's secondary to him. I characterize the guy as one who wants to be identified as the builder of a nation out of the Marshall Islands.

Willens: As to what?

Tenorio: I built a nation out of the Marshalls. That's his ambition. To him and to a lot of people, Amata Kabua is president for life and that's what is happening right now. Nobody would dare seriously to challenge him. People might challenge him, but the guy is going to die in office. Nobody will replace him.

Willens: That's interesting. The Marianas District Legislature created the Marianas Political Status Commission in 1972 and there were appointments from the various political parties, from the business community, and from the Carolina community. Did you have any input to the selection of the members of the Commission?

Tenorio: Not exactly, not directly. I was a member of the Chamber of Commerce at that time and the Chamber voted Joeten to be a member, I don't even remember now.

Willens: I think you were. At least in 1973 you were.

Tenorio: Yes, I guess I was. Joeten got selected by the Chamber of Commerce to represent the Chamber of Commerce, but then you know afterwards Joeten felt out of place. He felt out of place with too many Popular Party members ramming things down their throat.

Willens: Too many Popular Party?

Tenorio: Too many Popular Party. So he concluded that his effectiveness so far as influencing decisions was not that good. He contacted the Chamber members to be replaced by me, and that's how it was.

Willens: When did that happen?

Tenorio: That was in 1973.

Willens: After having run as an independent in 1972, did you become affiliated with the Territorial Party in 1973?

Tenorio: Yes.

Willens: Can you give me some a general assessment of the members of the Marianas Political Status Commission. You had a long-standing relationship of one kind or another with the Chairman, Ed Pangelinan. How would you characterize Ed Pangelinan as an individual and Chairman of the Commission during those years in the 1970s.

Tenorio: He was basically a very effective group leader. He knows how to get everybody in line. He's very articulate, he is very respected because of his legal education. A lot of the things happening had to do with legal matters. Of course, he was very respected among the group, especially the Popular Party group.

Willens: Did the Territorial Party representatives feel that he was too partisan in his running of the Commission?

Tenorio: Yes, several of us had actually discussed this, when I wasn't there. As you know, Ed Pangelinan was the Chairman then and, when he lost the election, he was supposed to be out because he was a member of the Commission as a Congress of Micronesia Senator. But Oly Borja gave up his seat so Eddie could come back in, which was fine. But among the Territorial Party members we had some discussions, Dr. Palacios, myself, Rabauliman, Oscar, Benjamin, Joannes, and some of the other guys, like Manny Sablan. You know, it

seems like when it comes to voting we are going to be outvoted anyway, so what are we doing here? This is all just to adopt the Popular Party agenda. I think you noticed that many times only a few people were speaking and the others from the Territorial Party were not really saying too much of substance. It was either myself, Dr. Palacios, or Oscar; Felix Rabauliman was quiet most of the time and so was Joannes Taimanao.

Willens: Well, just help me a little bit on that because my recollection is the same as yours. What I don't know now and I don't think I knew then is whether people were reluctant to speak because of political concerns, or because they felt that the issues were matters of such complexity that they didn't feel that they could contribute anything to the discussion.

Tenorio: A lot of it I think was because of the complexity of the issues.

Willens: Take someone like Joannes Taimanao, who I have a very faint recollection of. What was your assessment of him?

Tenorio: Joannes was, I think he was appointed through . . .

Willens: He came from Rota.

Tenorio: . . . Rota, but what I recollect about him, he was just always looking up to us for guidance, looking at the Territorial Party members. He would say some things, but you know most of the time he just listened to the group.

Willens: Was he self-confident with the use of English?

Tenorio: No, no, he wasn't. That's one of the problems.

Willens: Was that one of the factors that you think influenced the extent to which people participated?

Tenorio: That's correct.

Willens: I would like to ask for your evaluation of other members of the Commission that we have not previously discussed. For example, do you have any assessment of the contributions of Vice Chairman Santos?

Tenorio: One of the major contributions that Ben actually did was to get the Legislature to be cohesive in support of the Covenant. He was the key person that brought people together, mostly, of course, Popular Party members at that time. But there were some other members, like the present Governor now, who were also members of that Legislature which subsequently ratified the Covenant. Ben's contribution was critical at that time. He was a member of the Status Commission as well as the president of the Legislature.

Willens: Would you consider him to have been the leader of the Popular Party at the time?

Tenorio: Yes, I would say he was the key person because the Legislature at that time was almost 90 percent Popular Party. So he was instrumental in getting all of these people to think with one mind, that is to support the Covenant. As a matter of fact, even Larry Guerrero, who was then one of the members of the minority, supported the Covenant.

Willens: Do you remember any particular anecdotes or contributions that Mr. Santos made during the course of the Commission's activities?

Tenorio: No, not anything specific. I don't remember anything specific. He impressed me as a person who seemed to be the senior advisor to the Popular Party members. He was listened to and he talks sometimes in a philosophical manner, but I don't remember any specific thing that you know during the negotiations that stood out.

- Willens: Let me turn to another member of the Commission who happened to be the candidate against whom you ran in 1972, Senator Borja. What do you remember about Senator Borja's participation in the Commission?
- Tenorio: Senator Borja brought with him to the Commission a lot of history. A lot of recollection about what the people want, as well as the chronological events that took place from the time he was a member of the Municipal Council up to the time of the negotiations. He was instrumental in pointing out that the so-called initiatives by the people over a long period of time and through that process he was able to get the members to understand hopefully why they needed to continue to negotiate to be part of America.
- Willens: Did you think he was very strongly committed from the beginning to a close and permanent relationship with the United States?
- Tenorio: Yes, there's no doubt about that, there's no doubt about that. Although Oly, as you remember, of course, had been shifting party affiliation over the course of his political career, but one thing that stood out with him was the fact that he always wanted to be a part of the United States through any kind of affiliation. He did not want to be, for example, with Micronesia. Throughout his Senatorial terms in the Congress of Micronesia he was always very adamant that the people of the Northern Marianas desired to be part of the United States.
- Willens: He was regarded as a businessman in the community, though, isn't that correct?
- Tenorio: Well, he was a businessman, one of the most successful ones along with Joeten and Villagomez, who were seen as entrepreneurs at that time. I think he was more looked up by the people as a politician or as a historian similar to Dr. Palacios for example. That the same kind of, what do you call it, experience and the desire as far as you know of being part of the U.S.
- Willens: How would you describe Dr. Palacios' early sentiments with respect to status?
- Tenorio: Okay, his early sentiment was that he wanted, as I remember it, to have the ongoing future status of Micronesia negotiations intact and the Northern Marianas should be a part of it. As you recall, he was also in the Congress of Micronesia. He had the same kind of personal relationship that I had with the leaders of Micronesia. As I said before, I know this was one of the very critical factors in wanting to see that Micronesia stayed together. Dr. Palacios valued the personal relationships that we had with the Micronesians who were previously classmates, or just associates, and then became members of the Congress of Micronesia. On top of that, Dr. Palacios' sentiment toward Micronesian unity arose out of the fact that he was part Carolinian. He identified himself with the Carolinians.
- Willens: Do you remember any particular discussion or contribution that Dr. Palacios made during the work of the Commission?
- Tenorio: Definitely. I think one of them was the so-called plenary powers of Congress.
- Willens: The plenary powers of Congress?
- Tenorio: In Article IV(3)(2) of the Constitution of the United States.
- Willens: What do you remember of his position on that?
- Tenorio: His position was that sovereignty cannot be given away by the Commission. The sovereignty rests with the Commonwealth and we cannot allow the U.S. to have the power under the Constitution of the United States so that the Territorial Clause is applicable to the Commonwealth. I thought that was the one thing that he had, up to the very end,

never really acceded to. But, because he knew he would be outvoted, he kind of just let go. But he was not convinced.

Willens: Do you remember him as an active participant in the discussion of the Commission?

Tenorio: Yes, definitely he was one of the active members even though he was with the minority as a Territorial Party member. Even Rabauliman, Oscar Rasa, Manny Sablan, and I, we talked about how things are turning out. But then towards the very end, we all felt well, let's rally behind this Covenant. The people seem to want it, and rather than have a split vote every time, let's get together and work together with it. But he was definitely vocal, especially on this issue, and also on the economic issues. On the economic issues he was concerned (as I recall) about what's going to happen to the Commonwealth. Is the seven year so-called financial assistance provided in the agreement sufficient? Those are the two areas that I recall him to be quite concerned about.

Willens: After the second round of negotiations in May and June of 1973, there was an interview in the *Marianas Variety* of Dr. Palacios, Felix Rabauliman and Joeten expressing concern about the negotiations that had just concluded. In the course of that interview there were some reservations expressed about sovereignty that you made reference to and also the pace of the negotiations. Do you remember having a discussion with any of those three individuals about their sentiments at the time, which was shortly before you became a member of the MPSC in 1973?

Tenorio: No, I don't remember discussing this with them. I do remember a discussion with Joeten before he recommended me to replace him to the Chamber of Commerce. One of Joeten's concerns was the fact that this thing was going very, very fast. We should slow down a little bit and analyze things much more in detail. That's the way the pace was then. So I remember talking to Joeten about that. But not Dr. Palacios or Felix and the other folks. Only after I got in did we ever interact in terms of the way things were happening in the negotiations. We talked about the fact that since the Popular Party had the majority, it could get this thing through the Commission. This was the general impression that we had. Of course, we were then not so supportive of the negotiations. We were there because we wanted to be involved. If we didn't participate, it would be decided by one group. That was really the first objective—to be there and to look at things and try to slow it down. Not to slow it down for the sake of slowing it down, but to be able to analyze it more carefully. We were suspicious about the United States wanting to get this thing through as quickly as possible. During that time, one of the strongest criticisms that was brought up was that the U.S. wanted to make us a Commonwealth because of its military needs. At that time, the military question, defense and whatnot, was not a very popular issue out here. Even the U.S. Congress was not this supportive right after the Vietnam War, or doing the Vietnam War. We were aware of some things happening within the U.S. community that showed an anti-military mood. That sentiment kind of filtered down to the Northern Marianas.

Willens: At the beginning of the Commission's operation, one of its consultants was Joe Screen, who worked for Mr. Tenorio's enterprises. He did not continue to serve with the Commission after Mr. Tenorio resigned and you replaced him. Do you have any recollection of Mr. Screen and what contribution he made to the Commission?

Tenorio: No. I don't remember anything specific about Joe Screen. Of course, Joe Screen was an economist and a business advisor to Joeten. I guess he was helping Joeten more in the area of business concerns with respect to commonwealth status. But I don't remember whether he made any real contributions to the committee. It wasn't during my time.

- Willens: You mentioned Felix Rabauliman, who was appointed to the Commission as a representative of the Carolinian community. He was also a member of the Territorial Party as I understand the situation. Do you recall Mr. Rabauliman taking an active role in the work of the Commission?
- Tenorio: No, not really. It's similar to Joannes Taimanao; their participation was kind of subdued. They don't want to speak up too much. Felix would only speak on minority issues at times. I think that when it came to land, for example, we would talk about land ownership issues. I remember his concern was basically trying to protect the minority interest in land matters, also I think in business and employment opportunities.
- Willens: Employment of what?
- Tenorio: Employment opportunities for the minority.
- Willens: Do you think that he felt there was a real threat to the minority community that would develop in a new Commonwealth?
- Tenorio: Yes. I have that very strong feeling. The reason why is because I knew that he was consulting with the Carolinian leadership group during the course of the negotiations. They were worried that the Carolinian minority would be denied whatever rights would be extended under the Covenant in terms of land ownership and this type of thing. I don't know why they were concerned about land ownership because you know they shouldn't be, but as a minority I believe they felt they may be short-changed during the process.
- Willens: Looking back 20 years, do you feel there was any discrimination against the Carolinian minority in the Northern Marianas at that time?
- Tenorio: No. I think one of the basic problems of the Carolinians is that because they are a minority they want to amplify that status. I think that is wrong. That particular concern actually was reflected in the subsequent organization of the Commonwealth government. For example, the Carolinian Affairs Office was created in the Constitution and some types of legislation have to include Carolinian membership. The Second Constitutional Convention reflected a very strong cultural traditional Carolinian symbol.
- Willens: That was what?
- Tenorio: You know, the mwar-mwar and colorful flowers and things like that. But I didn't really see any discrimination at all. The opportunity was open to everybody and what hurt them somewhat in my own perception was the fact that they thought of themselves as a minority when actually they hold the upper hand in terms of overall community status because they speak two languages. They speak their own language, Carolinian, and they speak Chamorro fluently. In that sense they could have been very effective individually, and as a group, to do things the way they wanted to. But following traditional customs, I guess they didn't want to speak out.
- Willens: Who have been the emerging political leaders in the Commonwealth that have come from the Carolinian community?
- Tenorio: You mean now?
- Willens: Over the past 20 years.
- Tenorio: Over the past 20 years? We had several. Of course, Dr. Kaipat was a very prominent Carolinian leader. Benusto Kaipat. He is now deceased. He was a very, very effective politician and Carolinian leader, together with, of course, Felix Rabauliman. He was

the second Carolinian Affairs Officer appointed under our administration. Two terms, actually.

Willens: Have any of the Carolinians been elected to the Senate or the House?

Tenorio: Oh, yes. I don't remember all of them, but I do remember people like, half-Carolinians, like Herman Guerrero.

Willens: Herman R. Guerrero.

Tenorio: Herman R. Guerrero and Pete R. Guerrero. Phyllis Ogumoro was a woman elected to the CNMI Legislature. And, let's see, who else. Placido Tagabuel, Joe Lifofoi, and others were all of Carolinian descent. And they were all in the Territorial Party. We opened up opportunities in the political area. And they were elected very successfully.

Willens: Just a few more members of the Commission that I wish to ask you about now. What is your recollection of Vicente Camacho, who came from the Saipan Municipal Council?

Tenorio: Yes, I remembered Ben in the Commission. Ben is more of a listener type. He always listens to the discussion and then has his input among the group. Especially after a recess period, he would talk to me or talk to somebody else and say, "Hey, this is a good idea. Let's go for it." But he's not a vocal person or a very active participant during the negotiations, as I remember it. He would say things once in awhile and I don't really recall what specific subject he was more interested or involved in. He was more, I think, of a passive type of person. He listens and he expresses his sentiment out of session, not during the session.

Willens: Did you think that any of the individuals on the Commission had some concern about the consultants and whether the consultants were providing objective or useful advice?

Tenorio: Let me think, Howard. It is a very interesting question. In my group, which I will call the minority group, we sometimes discussed the relationship of the consultants with the United States or its representatives. And, frankly, I'll tell you this. There were times when we say, well, we have to be careful because maybe these consultants, because they are Americans, and they're from Washington, we have to watch out because they may be, ganging up with the U.S. side and may not be protecting our interests. This, frankly, was discussed openly among ourselves, not in the entire group.

Willens: They would have been particular directed against counsel?

Tenorio: Consultants, counsel, as well as the economic consultants, and associates like Jim White. Of course, there's also the concern that Ed Pangelinan may be too close to the consultants and that he is not listening too much to the group but more to the consultants. There was that concern also.

Willens: Do you remember any discussions with Ambassador Williams or members of the U.S. delegation about the role that the consultants were playing with respect to the work of the Commission?

Tenorio: Yes. As a matter of fact, interestingly enough, the comment from the U.S. side was that the consultants sometimes were going too far off and were not really serving you right. Or, you know, they blame you guys for having such a strong position developed on behalf of the Commission. The Commission presents it to the United States and the U.S. says, you know, this consultant is unreasonable. There is that, I remember that.

Willens: You remember those comments being made by any particular individual?

Tenorio: I don't remember exactly. They could be made by Ambassador Williams, it could be Colonel Strait or André, whoever are the other guys are over there. I don't remember all

the names. I remember some names. I remember, but there is the interesting part about this. Here we are worrying about the consultants not serving us and then, on the other side, they say, "Hey, these guys are actually giving you decisions we cannot agree on and this may jeopardize the negotiation." That's the mentality.

Willens: Was there any particular issue relating to economic assistance or political status that gave rise to that?

Tenorio: I'm trying to recall. No, I can't really recall anything.

Willens: Fair enough. Let me turn to one other member of the Commission, who might not be considered passive, and that is Joe Cruz.

Tenorio: Joe Cruz. Okay.

Willens: Well, what is your recollection of Mr. Cruz?

Tenorio: Joe Cruz is a big dynamite, I'll give him that.

Willens: A big dynamite?

Tenorio: He's a very explosive person. Joe Cruz, as I recollect, is also a very vocal, very persuasive speaker and, as a member of the Commission, one of its most active members. His main concern, as I recall, was that we got to protect Tinian. Tinian has given up two-thirds of the island for military purposes so we must find a way to protect Tinian and get Tinian a lot of benefits. He was very, very adamant about that, very vocal, like I said, and very emotional. That's my overall assessment of him. He's very interested in the debates and he's very concerned about a lot of things. One weakness that I observed about Joe Cruz was that he got very disturbed when other people in our own group made comments to the effect that the U.S. is not giving us enough benefits or we're rushing these things too quickly. Joe Cruz who is one guy who said, "Whatever it takes, God damn it, let's get this thing on and let's be part of America." He was one of the guys who were so anxious to get things done.

Willens: What do you think motivated him in that regard?

Tenorio: I really don't know. Maybe he was afraid that the U.S. might change its mind. I mean, over the course of our discussion there were all kinds of innuendoes. You know, you guys have got to make up your mind. You don't like this provision, there's nothing we can do about it. You got to accept it. Take it or leave it. That attitude, or that perception, sometimes comes up, at least from my standpoint. I know Joe Cruz was always very observant about it. As, "Hey, you guys, let's not rock the boat anymore. What the hell do you want? Let's not try to get the U.S. They might just pack up and go." That's Joe's attitude, as I observed it.

Willens: Did you get the sense that the U.S. delegation was pressing for a more rapid conclusion to the negotiations?

Tenorio: No, I think the U.S. was quite fair. I don't think that there was any undue pressure, or any kind of effort that I saw, indicating that the U.S. wanted to wrap things up. It's the Popular Party side. It's Eddie Pangelinan, Joe Cruz, Ben Santos, and the other guys. They were the ones, and this is the thing that bothered me our group, the so-called minority group. We said, "Why are you rushing things? There's a need to discuss this further." I think there was a little bit of unnecessary concern on the part of the Popular Party members in the Commission that, if we continue to discuss this and not have any more room open for compromise, the U.S. might get frustrated. Ambassador Williams might just say, "Well, I'll see you guys next year." There's that concern. And I know that the

members of the Popular Party were under pressure by their own party members. You know, whatever happens, you better hurry up, hurry up. We want to be part of America already. We don't want to go back to Micronesia. And this was reflected in the politics, in the partisan politics. You remember during several meetings of the Commission they were outside the windows looking in.

Willens: I like your recollection on that because I have a vague recollection of meeting on the second floor of the Saipan Municipal Council building and particularly near the end of the negotiations. I remember evening meetings near the very end where people quietly assembled on the balcony outside of the room in which we were meeting and listening. Who were those people?

Tenorio: Well, these were the old grassroots Democrats now, or the Popular Party people. Some of them passed away.

Willens: I recall them being principally women.

Tenorio: Yes. In fact, there's one person I'll never forget. She passed away already. But she was there looking in, looking at me, looking at everybody else, you know. Hurry up, hurry up. And there were a lot of women. There's no doubt about that. You remember the same thing I did.

Willens: Who arranged that, if it was arranged? Or was it a spontaneous event?

Tenorio: I think it was probably spontaneous. They heard that the Commission and the negotiation is coming to an end and it's their interest. They just wanted to go there and maybe give moral support to the group and to look also at the others there. Because I know that they didn't like us until the very end, I guess, after our group decided to get on the team, to get together, and finish the work. Even with that, several people just refused to accept the preliminary agreement, in particular Oscar [Rasa] and Felix [Rabauliman].

Willens: That's right. Neither Mr. Rasa nor Mr. Rabauliman signed the Covenant.

Tenorio: That's right.

Willens: I have a recollection of the evening meeting at the very end when, after much discussion, the members of the Commission were being asked to vote. And I remember some complaint from individual members of the Commission about the fact that there were these bystanders looking in, listening and applying pressure. Is that your recollection?

Tenorio: Oh yes, definitely, definitely. I guess that's the time when we were going to vote to approve it, then have it finalized with the drafting committee, and then have it presented later on. Yes, I remember that. I could be wrong, but I thought that just reflected their interest. Because there's always word by mouth about the Commission's work, what's happening and so on. I tell you, most of the people that were there that night outside on the balcony were people from the other side. They had been coached to go over there. I don't know for sure. I never even tried to find that out. All I remember was that there were lots of people there, lots of women, and I remember several faces of people who have passed away now, but they were very, very strong Popular Party members and very strong for the commonwealth association with the U.S.

Willens: Many of them were older people, as I recall.

Tenorio: Yes. Older people.

Willens: You mentioned Mitch Pangelinan before. What do you remember of Mitch Pangelinan's participation in the work of the Commission?

- Tenorio: Mitch Pangelinan. I think Mitch seemed to participate on most issues. I remember because he's quite knowledgeable. He's very outspoken himself and he's always asking questions.
- Willens: He recalls losing his temper once at a meeting with the U.S. delegation and using a profanity that he had to apologize for. He recounts that story as an evidence of his impatience with the negotiations. Do you have any recollection of any particular anecdote or debate in which Mr. Pangelinan participated?
- Tenorio: I don't know, Howard. I can't, let me see now, I don't know if there's anything at all. I only remember him talking, practically on all of the sections of the Covenant. He was not as vocal, not as emotional as Joe Cruz was, but he was outspoken. He was a very active participant, I think, on most subjects. I can't remember any one single issue that he discussed that kind of stuck with me.
- Willens: During the course of the work of the Commission, the Chairman, Ed Pangelinan, and the Vice Chairman, Ben Santos, would often be asked to meet with the Ambassador personally, and sometimes the Commission would direct them to advance certain positions. Did you form any opinion as to the kind of relationship that Ed Pangelinan had with the Ambassador?
- Tenorio: Not personally. As a group, though, we did discuss that particular issue. I'm just talking about the small clique that we had, Territorial Party clique. Gee, there they go again. I wonder what they're discussing, although we discussed in advance what needed to be presented. But there's always this concern about being too close to the other side. Dr. Palacios was especially very critical about being close to the Ambassador, for example, like Ed was. He was quite close personally. Professionally close we have no problem with, but we did wonder what they're talking about now. Is Eddie acceding to something or promising Ambassador Williams some things that we didn't authorize him to do? Would he give him some assurance not to worry about an issue because they're [the Popular Party members] going to win anyway. These were very important concerns on our part.
- Willens: Why did you think that the Territorial Party minority was of limited political force within the Commission since, as I recall, there was a need of a quorum of ten members of a 15-person Commission before anything could be approved? Near the end of the negotiations, I believe the Territorial Party had more than five members on the Commission.
- Tenorio: Yes, more than five, more than five.
- Willens: If the Territorial Party had wanted to vote as a block to oppose individual provisions or the Covenant as a whole, it had the votes within the Commission, isn't that correct?
- Tenorio: No, no, no. We didn't think so.
- Willens: No? Why not?
- Tenorio: No, we didn't think there could be a "no" vote. In fact, my own recollection was that, no matter what, any issue that is put on the floor for the Commission's vote would be won by the other side. You know, in other words, we'll be overruled.
- Willens: Even though you had more than five votes?
- Tenorio: Yes. I believe so.
- Willens: Did you think that when it came down to it, some members of the Territorial group—you or Manny Sablan or Dr. Palacios—might vote against the Covenant?
- Tenorio: No. You see, here's the thing. At the time that some of the critical votes were to be taken,

some members, like myself and Manny Sablan, actually were pretty much convinced that the other guys were just playing games, or they were just trying to unnecessarily delay or disrupt discussions.

Willens: Which other guys are you referring to?

Tenorio: Well, Oscar Rasa for one, [Felix] Rabauliman. Dr. Palacios was much more reasonable about it, but he was following along. And I guess, as I said, toward the very end there's really nothing much that I can stand up for that will be reasonable, that will not make me look silly in opposing something that everybody thinks is good and in my own feelings I know is good. Why oppose it if it feels good. And besides, at that time also, I was much more convinced that this is the way we should go. The sentiment of the people was very positive. They wanted the Covenant. And I also had my own requests fulfilled by discussing things in detail. I think there was something like a six month delayed period there, not just to delay, but because issues have to be discussed more. I remember that we were supposed to complete the negotiation six months before. But I think we extended it to another six months and we discussed things like additional benefits to Rota and Tinian, a guaranteed capital improvement program for Tinian. We talked about the content of the Technical Agreement and the access to the beach areas. All of these things actually were discussed during that six month extension, so-called extension, period. I remember being the one that was concerned about the lack of time, so there was that opportunity to discuss these other issues, including economic programs. Some issues actually were re-discussed or were brought up again. Also at the time the Republican, the so-called Territorial group, was pretty much disintegrating. That's why actually there weren't that many issues then that were really divisive. There might be a difference of opinion by various people, but it's not divisive and it's not a difference that would be a disadvantage to the Northern Marianas. There weren't the substantial issues that really deserved to be further debated upon so as to justify more delay.

Willens: Well, there was one issue that developed at a late date that was divisive, but perhaps not on political party terms, and that was the request by Tinian and Rota that there be a bicameral legislature so as to protect the interests of Tinian and Rota. Do you have any recollection of that particular issue?

Tenorio: Sure. I remember that. We will get to the point where the problem is internal, where the U.S. (I guess) was kind of open-minded about it and said they will support us on that. And they recommended to Congress the formation of the bicameral legislature. I think they kind of read our minds that we had our own internal problem—that is that Rota and Tinian, being a minority in terms of population, certainly felt very insecure about this whole relationship if there's no political accommodations made. And the only way that that could be made was through formation of a bicameral legislature, where they would be represented equally in one House and have one man, one vote in the other House. You get to the point where they say, "Well, if you guys don't support this thing, there's no Commonwealth, because we're not going to vote for it."

Willens: Do you remember that statement being made by representatives of Rota or Tinian?

Tenorio: Let's see. I don't remember, but I remember talking to Joe Cruz. And this is one very strong point that he made. He says, "You guys are going to get two-thirds of Tinian. We need to be protected. There's got to be a way for us to participate. If you want the Covenant to be approved, let's agree on this thing." It's like a strangle-hold on the entire Commission. But, we decided, what's the point in negotiating all of this thing if Tinian and Rota are not

going to vote for it? And there's no other request they were making, other than this, the bicameral legislature. But that was one kind of heated discussion internally.

Willens: Do you have any recollection as to why it came up at such a late date in the deliberations of the Commission?

Tenorio: Let's see. I think one of the reasons was that the representatives from Tinian and Rota knew that if they had brought this request up early enough, there's a lot of time to study the issue and they may lose out.

Willens: You think it may have been a deliberate political tactic?

Tenorio: It's a deliberate political tactic, yes. You know, let the Commission do its work and let it waste time and money and let's wait and see when we're going to drop the bomb. I don't know that their demands would be met, but they didn't want to bring it up so early enough so it becomes the critical issue and then dilutes [in importance] toward the end. Secondly, I think they were conscious in their own minds, also, that this was going to be a very hot issue, because you're talking about equal representation in one house and right next to us is Guam which has a unicameral legislature. Their requests may be taken as ridiculous, so they kind of held back for that reason, too. But I think they were conscious about timing the discussion to get the maximum impact.

Willens: Going back to 1973, just before you were appointed to the Commission, you wrote some letters to the *Marianas Variety* on the subject of reported land speculation on Tinian. Do you remember being concerned in 1973 with the fact that certain Commission members appeared to have participated in land transactions on Tinian?

Tenorio: Yes. I don't remember the letter exactly, but I remember something to that effect. I was concerned because I wanted to make sure that the integrity of the Commission was untainted and that the reputation of individual members would not jeopardize the public desire for a Covenant. If this kind of thing continued on, a corrupt Commission would have no basis to negotiate political status on behalf of the people. I was tracking some of these people. Some of them were not members of the Commission, but they were connected with people in the Commission and the Popular Party leadership. They were consciously and deliberately designing how to take advantage of the negotiation.

Willens: Did you think these land transactions were in fact consummated?

Tenorio: Some of them were consummated prior to the negotiation. Others were actually consummated during the negotiation or transferred from one to the other without the other guy, the original owner, knowing what's happening. The land issue, of course, was discussed generally within the Commission, but the details of, for example, the acreage and the activities were not immediately known outside of the Commission. The lease-back areas and many of these things were not really discussed in the Commission

Willens: Another issue that came up during the summer of 1973 was the imposition of a so-called moratorium on homesteading and economic development on Tinian. This prompted a good deal of public controversy. Do you have any recollection of meetings in which these issues were discussed?

Tenorio: Oh, yes, definitely. The Commission members went to Tinian several times and, of course, at the time the issue was brought out there was a major uproar in Tinian.

Willens: What is your recollection of that?

Tenorio: Well, we had a town meeting and people, of course, are very interested in getting

- homesteads before the negotiation is concluded. There are a lot of young kids that needed to have land for homesteading, both agricultural and residential homesteading.
- Willens: Was that because they wanted to actually develop the land or did they want to have land that they could sell to the United States government?
- Tenorio: Basically they wanted the house lot for their residence and they wanted agricultural lots so that they could have just what their parents had. I don't believe at that time they were very informed in the speculative value of the land. They were more interested in getting the land so that when the negotiation was concluded they would have that land already available instead of losing it to the military.
- Willens: Was the land on which they wanted to get homesteads in the southernmost one-third of the island, which they knew was likely to remain under civilian control, or were they trying to get homesteads in the upper two-thirds of the island which the military had declared to be their principal interest?
- Tenorio: I think most of them actually were utilizing land within the proposed military area. In fact, there were grazing leases over there and all kinds of agricultural activities. Some of them, of course, owned the land already within the proposed military area. But others, of course, were perhaps smarter or had been given advice by others. The main thing was their concern that they were going to have to give up a lot of the land on Tinian and, if that is the case, then the future generations will not be able to acquire any more land because it will have been leased to the U.S. So that was their principal worry.
- Willens: What happened as a result of this town meeting and subsequent discussion of this issue?
- Tenorio: I think we gave them assurances that there will be sufficient land for the village homesteading program, as well as the agricultural program. There is the Marpi Valley area, in the southeastern part where we would have one-third of the island, which is something like 6,000 hectares of land and would still be available. A portion of the Jones ranch at that time was not a part of the proposed military lease. We tried to assure them that even with the proposed military plan to take over two-thirds of the land, there would be sufficient land for everybody for the next generation. I guess the explanation was fairly good, fairly reliable, so they were satisfied. One element of dissatisfaction came about because of the involvement of Ken Jones. They didn't say they were against the military take-over, but they kind of created a very questionable impression upon the people about the military takeover of Tinian. They had an interest there; the ranch is two-thirds within the proposed military lease area. Jones did not feel that the people should lose that because it is a strong part of the Tinian economy. They had some multimillion dollar proposal to develop the property into a western-type, cowboy-type project, and people might lose their jobs if Jones is forced out of the area by the military.
- Willens: Let me see if I understand this. Were the people of Tinian concerned that the Jones leasehold might be threatened by the U.S. military plans?
- Tenorio: They were concerned, but the main concern came from the Jones.
- Willens: Afraid that Jones might resist the U.S. military leasing effort because it would endanger his own business activities?
- Tenorio: That's right, exactly. And, of course, afterward we took care of that problem through the Technical Agreement, I guess.
- Willens: Was it resolved to Jones' satisfaction?

- Tenorio: I think Jones was assured by the U.S. that it did not intend to develop that area in the immediate future and that the ranch, insofar as it was in the affected area, could continue to operate. I think that also there was a promise for some kind of compensation under U.S. law for Jones. But the main thrust was that the U.S. had no intention of developing the area taken over from Jones, so the ranch would continue to operate as is.
- Willens: As a result of this discussion in 1973, did the Trust Territory change its policy with respect to awarding homestead permits on Tinian?
- Tenorio: If I remember correctly, the Trust Territory did, I think through the request of the District Administrator here to the High Commissioner, in the area where there was already a preliminary delineation of the military lease area. That area should not be given out from then on. But lands that were outside of that area certainly were available. That's exactly what happened. Subdivided lands were given out right next to San Jose, for example, and then further away afterwards. I guess the initial reaction of the people was that they were not going to get any land, but even after the moratorium was implemented land continued to be given out as homesteads.
- Willens: The issue became so important that Ambassador Williams came out to Guam and Saipan in late August 1973. He appeared before the District Legislature in August 1973 to discuss this and other issues. Do you have any recollection of what position Ambassador Williams took on these issues?
- Tenorio: I don't know. I don't remember.
- Willens: Let's turn to the third round of negotiations which was the first one in which you participated. One issue that received a lot of consideration during that set of talks was the citizenship option that should be offered to the citizens of the Northern Marianas. As you may recall, there was a good deal of discussion about what citizenship meant and whether people should be entitled to be nationals of the United States rather than citizens if they wanted to be. Do you have any recollection as to why this particular issue had significance to the people of the Northern Marianas?
- Tenorio: Actually, it did not have any important significance. In fact, it was one issue that came about from the Carolinian community more out of pride, I believe, out of opposition to be part of America than for any significant reason. In other words, they are saying, "Well, you guys, you Chamorros, may want to become U.S. citizens, but nobody can force me to." This was, I guess, one area where Felix Rabauliman participated and wanted to have an option. If we don't want to be U.S. citizens, we should have that option. But it was not a major issue, even among the Carolinians. Some, of course, would express their concerns to Felix, but it was not a substantial issue.
- Willens: Were there concerns about particular groups of people in the Northern Marianas that should not be given the option of becoming U.S. citizens? For example, many Micronesians from other districts lived on Saipan because they worked for the Trust Territory government. Was there any feeling one way or the other as to whether those Micronesians should be offered the opportunity to become U.S. citizens?
- Tenorio: No, I think at that time we had already talked about their eligibility. We weren't concerned about the other Micronesians getting citizenship at that time, because we knew that most of them were temporary workers under the Trust Territory; they had their own islands or political entity to go to. So I don't recall any concern about Micronesians getting U.S. citizenship. I don't remember to what detail we discussed eligibility for citizenship, but we weren't concerned about the Micronesians. We felt that, of course, the prime recipients of

this whole relationship as far as citizenship is concerned would be the Northern Marianas descent people, and that includes Chamorros and Carolinians.

Willens: Inclusive of the Carolinians and Chamorros?

Tenorio: Yes.

Willens: But excludes people from the other districts?

Tenorio: Yes, like I said before, that was the general idea. We did not negotiate the Covenant for them; we negotiated for the indigenous peoples.

Willens: One of the issues that occupied a considerable amount of time during the third round of negotiations was the way to protect the Marianas right of local self-government in light of the plenary power of the United States under the Territorial Clause. You made reference to this earlier. Do you have any recollections of discussions either within the Commission or with the U.S. delegation on the subject of the right of local self-government?

Tenorio: I remember discussing the plenary powers of Congress. I remember Ambassador Williams making reference to the way it is in Guam, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa, and how the powers of Congress are exercised under Article IV(3)(2) of the U.S. Constitution.

Willens: What was your reaction to his description of those other areas?

Tenorio: My reaction, I guess, was this was a completely different kind of political relationship. In a way the Trust Territory arrangement was a blessing in disguise, if you want to call it that, because we were given the opportunity under the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement to select our own political destiny, unlike those other islands such as Guam, Virgin Islands and American Samoa which were already a part of the U.S. and subject to the Territorial Clause. I am trying to recall incidents where I discussed this with, maybe not with Mr. Ambassador, but maybe with Dr. Palacios. We tried to rationalize how can you have self-government if there is someone telling you what to do like they were doing on Guam?

Willens: At the time that you joined the Commission, there had already been preliminary agreement to the so-called mutual consent provision. The United States had already agreed to limit its plenary power by tentatively agreeing to a mutual consent provision. It was unclear as to how far the mutual consent provision would reach with respect to the Covenant provisions. Do you remember any discussion or negotiation during further sessions of the Commission about the coverage of the mutual consent provision?

Tenorio: Not too much. I think what I remembered was that citizenship was one important area. We figured we need to preserve that. We need to make sure that this agreement is not altered in anyway that we would lose citizenship. Of course, the other one is the land alienation provision and the political arrangement. The U.S. cannot unilaterally change the status because most of us in the Commission felt that it should be a permanent relationship. As far as the plenary powers, I don't really think, Howard, that we discussed that in any detail. I thought that, at the time that I got on the Commission, it was pretty much agreed to, although now it is kind of cloudy to me.

Willens: We will come back to that.

Tenorio: It is very cloudy to me. That is why it is very hard for me to recall what really took place. But I thought at that time that nobody wanted to discuss the subject any further, because it was such a delicate complicated subject that either side bringing the issue up might jeopardize the negotiation, because it's a key part of the whole relationship, like an adopted person going into a family.

- Willens: That is exactly right. In fact, the discussions on that subject were delicate and they did continue for the next year. But you made an observation I think is most interesting—that the Trusteeship Agreement provides the Northern Mariana citizens with an opportunity that people of Guam or American Samoa or the Virgin Island never really had and that was to negotiate with the United States about the terms of their relationship. Didn't it from time to time strike you as preposterous or most unusual that you and 14 other members of this community were sitting there across the table from an Ambassador with a full array of professional advisers to discuss the terms of a political relationship?
- Tenorio: No, in fact, on the contrary, I thought it was like, I said, a blessing in disguise. It was an era in history (so to speak) where we were lumped under the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement because of the accident of war. I say, "Too bad Guam, you voted against us several years ago and now, look at you chewing a finger now trying to figure out what is happening in the north." I even recall a talk with former Congressman Won Pat about how we were very lucky. He made that statement on the floor, that these people from former Japanese colonies were now being given all of these opportunities. No, I didn't think it preposterous at all. I felt very proud of the fact that being a Trust Territory was really not that bad; here is our opportunity to really exercise what is provided for under the Charter of the United Nations and especially with the Trusteeship Agreement. I gave the United States a lot of credit for fulfilling that so-called guardian obligation as the Trustee, providing the Micronesians with the opportunity called for under the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement to pursue self-government or independence and to develop the economics and political programs in Micronesia. So it was a very happy thing for me. I was very proud of it.
- Willens: Some commentators have observed that the Marianas people, through the Commission, were at a great disadvantage in negotiating with the United States because of the inequality of resources available to two parties. Do you have any reaction or recollection as to what your feeling was at the time as to your ability and that of the Commission to negotiate these difficult subjects responsibly with the U.S. delegation?
- Tenorio: Yes, I didn't have any problem at all. I didn't think the U.S. was superior to us in terms of negotiating. Of course we relied heavily on the legal advice that you folks provided us and economic advice. But one thing at least from my own view point, which made me very, very comfortable in the negotiations, was the fact that I went and finished school. I wasn't a dropout. I knew basic stuff about American history and tradition, thinking, ways of life. I wasn't a novice in the American community, I know what's happening, and I read a lot. I like to read. I like to feel that I understand what I read, even legal position papers. The other point is that I knew what I wanted. I think most of us knew what we wanted. And that kind of feeling sometimes gives you an advantage over your counterpart in negotiations, because they don't know what you want. If you really know what you want and stick to it, or try to be persuasive and get an argument through, my faith was that the American representatives would be reasonable. They would listen to reason and, if you give them an argument that is persuasive, they would buy it. That's the way I approached the negotiation. Of course, some of us were not as articulate, but they could use the process of sharing information, sharing ideas in Chamorro, and then having somebody else express their ideas. We didn't feel at all we were at a disadvantage.
- Willens: There was one unnamed Commission member who was cited in the paper to the effect that putting us into the negotiations against the United States was like putting me in the ring against Cassius Clay.
- Tenorio: Yes, I remember that comment.

- Willens: Who made that?
- Tenorio: Somebody made that comment.
- Willens: I gather you did not share that sentiment?
- Tenorio: No, of course not. I mean hell, why should I tell everybody that I'm weak. You know, I took my job seriously as a Commission member and negotiator and I didn't want anybody to know how weak I am even though I know I'm weak. I mean, you giving away something that's so vital to this whole process and to me that's the first mistake that anybody makes. I don't feel comfortable with Ambassador Williams and the lawyers and the military strategists over there looking down at you. I look at them at the same level. I felt comfortable after knowing you folks. I felt much more comfortable that we can communicate with these lawyers and they will give us the advice that we want. They're working for the Commission.
- Willens: You spoke about the members of the Commission talking in Chamorro and I remember those occasions so vividly. Was there a particular subject matter that would persuade people to sort of discuss privately in the vernacular or how would you explain the times at which the Commission would decide to speak in Chamorro?
- Tenorio: Sometimes it's a matter of strategy. Especially in front of those who do not speak Chamorro.
- Willens: Including the Commission's own consultants.
- Tenorio: Yes, that's right.
- Willens: Were they matters of particular sensitivity?
- Tenorio: Sometimes. I can't recall one single issue, but in most cases it was just a strategy. Why don't we talk in Chamorro? Let's get these guys confused. Some things we pretend too. You know we learned a little tactics here and there. So let's just kind of take a little rest and let's talk in Chamorro. We have no reason to talk, and I know the U.S. is wondering what in the hell is going on. So then they brought in Mr. What's his name from Guam.
- Willens: Who was that?
- Tenorio: Somebody came in from Guam I believe, a military attache or something.
- Willens: Did he stay with the U.S. delegation?
- Tenorio: He stayed with the U.S. for a while, not too long. I don't recall his name but I remember that they brought in a Chamorro.
- Willens: Did you remember the Commission speaking in Chamorro sometimes when the U.S. delegation was present?
- Tenorio: Yes, right. Oh yes.
- Willens: But the Commission members also felt free whenever they wanted too during their internal meetings to talk in Chamorro.
- Tenorio: Sometimes, for those especially who could not express themselves very well. They were kind of bashful to talk in English, so we would talk in Chamorro. But some of them wanted to be more private in discussing things we wanted to talk about. Just about us, nothing to do with lawyers or anybody else, just you know, what shall we do about this thing?
- Willens: Was it a way to clear the air sometimes among the members of the Commission?

- Tenorio: Yes. Sometimes there may be some differences among the members. So we say, let's discuss this. Yes, I remember talking about those things.
- Willens: One thing I remember is that certain members of the Commission who were not as articulate in English assumed a totally different personality once they were speaking in their own language.
- Tenorio: Yes, that's true. Like Joannes for example, or Bernard Hofschneider sometimes, and Frank Hocog. Remember these guys were kind of transitional members?
- Willens: Yes.
- Tenorio: These are the people I felt were more comfortable speaking in the vernacular.
- Willens: I remember hearing then, and I've heard frequently ever since, that Ben Manglona is a very successful orator in Chamorro.
- Tenorio: Ben the Lieutenant Governor?
- Willens: The now Lieutenant Governor.
- Tenorio: Yes.
- Willens: He certainly had command of the English language.
- Tenorio: But in Chamorro he quite persuasive. Yes. Very persuasive as a matter of fact.
- Willens: One of the issues that came up during the third round related to the application of U.S. laws in the Marianas, and there was talk about the customs laws and the income tax laws. Do you have any recollection as to which of those issues was of particular importance so far as you were concerned?
- Tenorio: Let's say, yes. Couple of issues. One is the minimum wage, the exemption of the Commonwealth from the U.S. minimum wage.
- Willens: There was a considerable debate on that within the Commission, wasn't there?
- Tenorio: Yes. But I think in most cases there was basic agreement that we can't follow the U.S. system. Even though it's a politically very good issue. But also economically disastrous, and we all knew that; I think it was Jim Leonard who actually was very persuasive with respect to maintaining our own local minimum wage based on local economic conditions.
- Willens: I remember some members of the Commission and outside commentators urging the Commission to accept the U.S. minimum wage on the grounds that it would bring immediate benefits to the people.
- Tenorio: That's right. In fact they were looking at Guam all the time and saying, "Hey, why are we becoming a part of the U.S. if we cannot be like Guam regarding minimum wages?" Guam wages was fairly much in line with the U.S. minimum wage at that time.
- Willens: Did you and others feel under political pressure from your constituents to agree to an increase to the minimum wage?
- Tenorio: No, not me. I was not convinced that we should apply minimum wages. I think some of the people just didn't understand this whole concept of the relationship between minimum wages and the economic well-being of the island at that time, especially given the fact that we didn't even know whether the \$15 million of federal assistance under the Covenant would be sufficient to really apply that concept. But it was an attractive political gesture. Especially for those that opposed the Covenant, because they felt why should we become Americans and not have these benefits. I think that was overruled by the

more rational approach—to increase minimum wage as the economy grows so that you don't drive the local businesses down quickly. And that would have happened. This is an interesting subject now again. I remember talking about and thinking ahead as to what we do if the U.S. system is adopted. When do we adopt, or when do we get up to that level?

Willens: So it is a current political issue?

Tenorio: Yes, it's a current political issue. And of course the tax system. I think we also discussed that. Mirroring the U.S. income tax but maintaining our right to enact any other taxes. I remember that one too.

Willens: How important, in your judgment, was the authority of the Northern Marianas to be able to administer its own income tax?

Tenorio: I think it's extremely important. I think that's one of the fundamental provisions. My understanding of self-government is to be able to enact our own tax and for the U.S. government to respect that because we know better. The whole point in this political relationship, Howard, is very simple to me. We know better and let us administer local affairs ourselves. Too much government interference is an insult to this whole process to me. I mean, we negotiated something very carefully, but maybe the U.S. was much more superior in negotiating. Maybe this is the part where I would blame ourselves that maybe we were too trusting. Too trusting during the time of the negotiation. We would say, "Well, the U.S. is a fair country. It's the strongest nation in the world. It's very humanitarian. It's very generous. It's been fair to its citizens." So we took a lot of things to heart and said, "Things will work out okay." Now the provision in the Covenant where we could enact any other tax, local or territorial tax, was to me really a very important provision. That would give us the opportunity to study our own economic condition and to try to tailor any taxation or raising of revenue through what's practical, what's realistic, what's happening. And the federal assistance would be like a supplement to the local revenue. To be honest about it, I'm very disappointed in how the federal government is looking at our own tax structure. Things have changed. You know we had a big fight with Burton about our rebate provision. All Burton was saying at the time we negotiated the Covenant was, "God damn it, collect your tax and know how much it is, and I don't give a damn what you do with it." That's what he told me. That's what he told Larry Guerrero. That's not what's happening right now. We collect the tax and then we rebate. So we rebate 95 percent. Now the U.S. Congress is saying, "Hey, that's crazy. You are coming over here asking us for money and then giving away 95 percent of the tax. That's not fair." I don't know who's right on this thing. I follow Burton. We learned from him, he is our godfather. And he said that to me: "Collect your damn tax, and I don't care what you do with it afterwards. Just know how much money you got." And I think he really meant it, because that shows how much independence Burton was willing to provide us. Because of the Covenant provision endorsing local self-government, these are things that should be respected by the federal government. If they don't want to give us money, just say so. Just say, "We don't want to give you any more money." But don't come around here telling us, increase your tax, don't do rebates, take care of alien workers—this kind of thing to me is abrasive. It's anti-Covenant. It's not the spirit of the Covenant. I feel very emotional about it. Because you know, otherwise I lied to the people when I went out there and start educating them about the Covenant and how good it is. I say in my own words, "Let's trust The United States. They're not going to let us down. What's agreed upon, they'll respect it". I was out there every night. God damn it, they throw rocks at me. And the ladies would swear at me and everything that I stood up and campaigned for during the educational process. Now I see these things eroding so quickly because there's a change in

mentality in the Congress. There are all kinds of crazy things happening over there, some people jealous of Commonwealth, like Jeff Farrow.

Willens: Who?

Tenorio: The Congressman from American Samoa used to be very close to Burton. I am sure that Burton brainwashed him with the Covenant and the need to preserve this very unique political relationship with the Northern Marianas. Maybe American Samoa would eventually benefit from this thing. He was a student of Burton. But now he has this changed attitude, because of changing time I guess. I don't know. That's why I feel very, very hurt about these guys. I mean maybe it's part of the problem of the Governor that he can't communicate. I don't remember having this kind of problem when I was in the government. But my point is that a lot of issues in the Covenant that were assumed to the greatest extent possible to be left to local authority, local decision-making processes, are now being questioned, challenged, and even ridiculed. I don't feel right about it. I don't know, I'm not in a position to do anything. I like to talk about it. That's the way I feel about it. I'm one of the guys who feel very strongly about the Covenant; every time somebody says something about it that I did, I say, "Hey wait a minute." Because I put my heart into that. I opposed it in the beginning. I was there because Joeten said, "Come on, go in there and give them hell." So I did. But then, you know, it gradually grew into me. It gradually grew into me. I began to understand and look at what the people want. These are the people that I represented. Hell, this is what they want, forget about your God damn personal feelings. Okay. Study what's in it and understand it and eventually that's what happened. So you know, it's a growing thing for me. It grew into me and it's rooted so deeply that God damn, ever time I hear Mr. Miller criticizing us, I feel pissed.

Willens: When did you first meet Congressman Burton?

Tenorio: I met Burton, as a matter of fact, right after my inauguration in January 1975, when I beat Eddie Pangelinan for a Congress of Micronesia Senate seat. I was already a member of the Commission. Eddie was chairman but lost his membership on the Commission because I beat him. But Oly Borja gave his seat to Eddie through arrangement of the Party. Eddie and I were good friends. We grew up together, we went to school together, we're good pals. Only the political difference, that's all. So anyway, Eddie decided we should go to Washington and be with Burton. I think Burton communicated with him.

Willens: The two of you went together?

Tenorio: Yes, we went together to Washington, because he's still the chairman. I don't know whether there was some kind of an oversight hearing there at that time. Possibly, yes. So I went, and we made an appointment to see Burton. The funny thing that happened was that we went into Burton's office and Adrian Winkel was there. I guess it was Adrian. And there's no Congressman there. He said that the Congressman will be right out to see you. As Burton was walking out of his office, into that waiting room there, he says, "Where is the guy that beat Eddie Pangelinan? I want to see him. I don't want to see Ed." Eddie was right next to me. Funny, you know. "I want to see the guy that beat Eddie Pangelinan because you know what? I was defeated once too—by a dead person—in this race in California." Whether it was true or not, I don't know, but he made reference to that and said, "At one time I was running and I was defeated by a dead person." But any way, he was very nice to me. He said, "I like your style; it's very rough. It's a real western rough style."

Willens: Did you regard him as a consistent supporter of the Northern Marianas?

- Tenorio: Oh, yes. Burton and I became very good friends. Somehow we just kind of attracted each other. He'd talk, he'd swear at me, he'd ask me to mix his vodka. We'd drink together in his office, while he was making phone calls about the redwood forest and all of those things. But I regarded him as really the key person in the entire United States. If you had to pick one individual, I think it was through his effort that the Covenant became a reality. Of course, there were many other supporters and people involved in it, but I think it was through his persistence that it got done. This is the important thing about no support; he's the one American who was convinced beyond doubt that the people from the Northern Marianas genuinely and sincerely loved the United States. He was very moved by all the petitions and all the speeches that people made in front of Congress about being part of America. So he wouldn't listen to and got upset with what's his name from Rhode Island [Pell] for making some crazy comments like: "Why are the Northern Marianas like this? What if people from the Cayman Islands want to become Americans, do we also give them that?" You know, that kind of thing, I know he got rattled by that. But the guy was persistent.
- Willens: Did you remember any discussions with him about the negotiations or the provisions of the Covenant?
- Tenorio: We talked about everything in the Covenant. It is hard to figure out which one was more important to him.
- Willens: Did he think the Covenant defined a different relationship than the Guam Organic Act?
- Tenorio: Oh, definitely, definitely. This Covenant, he knows. He had consulted with Ambassador Williams, and he read the Covenant himself.
- Willens: What did he think of the document?
- Tenorio: I think he thought it was very unique. He thought that the Covenant was a very unique document. It was superior to Guam's Organic Act, superior to the Virgin Islands and American Samoa, because they are under a different kind of relationship. They do not have a commonwealth; they don't even have a constitution over there. I'm sure that he viewed the Covenant as a special, unique political arrangement that is unprecedented, and I think he mentioned that word several times in speeches or wherever.
- Willens: Did he give appropriate credit to Ambassador Williams and the U.S. delegation?
- Tenorio: Oh sure, he did that many times. He was especially very pleased with the fact that Ambassador Williams kept the Congress and his committee very, very closely informed about the progress in the negotiations. If there were provisions here and there that the Ambassador was not certain about, he would consult with the Congressman Burton's committee at all times. So he was very pleased with Ambassador Williams' role as a principal negotiator for the U.S. He was overall pleased with the negotiations. At times, he talked about the need to make sure that the minority interests were protected, and he was generally very concerned about criticism that the minorities were not being provided proper opportunities. He wanted to make sure they are protected, that they are taken care of. He's for the little man, so to speak. His heart is real down in the so-called disadvantaged group. He's just that kind of person.
- Willens: He did take a position on the income tax laws that was contrary to what the U.S. delegation and the Commission tentatively had agreed to. Just to refresh your recollection, the U.S. delegation and the MPSC tentatively agreed that the Internal Revenue Code would not apply in the Marianas. But then at the next session, the U.S. delegation informed the Commission that because of Congressman Burton's feelings and position, they would

have to back away from that commitment. They then proposed that the Internal Revenue Code be adopted here as a Territorial tax. Do you have any recollection of that change in U.S. policy, and why Congressman Burton might have felt that way?

Tenorio: I think, yes, not too much with Burton. I don't know whether it was in a discussion with Williams or just among the delegation. One of his major concerns as far as the Covenant negotiation process was concerned was he did not want to hurt Tony Won Pat, his very good friend. He's always thinking about Tony, about the Covenant, and he's always trying to reassure him, don't worry Tony, I'm not going to screw you up, you know, Guam is going to be all right, I'll take care of you. It was much more of a personal feeling to protect Tony, so that Tony would not be accused later on by Guamanians that, hell, you're there as a delegate and look at the Northern Marianas getting all kinds of benefits, what do we get, nothing. He's going to lose the election, see. So I remember the tax issue as one that caused Burton's interference in the negotiations, that is, to make sure that the tax laws in the Northern Marianas are the same as in Guam. Otherwise, Tony is going to get blamed, and a lot of the Guamanian businesses might go to Saipan and establish over there, causing [Guam] to lose out economically.

Willens: Did you think Congressman Burton ultimately believed that the Northern Marianas and Guam should be unified?

Tenorio: He mentioned that several times to me. Several times to me he said that the only other commonwealth that is going to come into being is Guam and the CNMI. He really believed in that.

Willens: How did you react to that?

Tenorio: Well, I didn't really want to confront him with that, you know, the guy's such a rough character. You don't even want to discuss those issues seriously with him. So we would say, "Well, Congressman, maybe Guam should start thinking about its sister islands to the north as being the center of the capital of the state of the Marianas." They used to laugh about it. He knew what I meant, you know. Sometimes, I reminded him about the fact that hey, Guam really didn't want us, they voted against us. But he told me several times, there is no more commonwealth, even for Guam, Guam's going to have to get together with the CNMI.

Willens: Are you familiar with the efforts of Guam in the last few years to have a so-called Commonwealth Act enacted by Congress?

Tenorio: Yes.

Willens: Are you generally familiar with what they are trying to do?

Tenorio: Generally familiar, I keep telling my Guaminian friends there is no way

Willens: Let me put a somewhat different question to you. The records indicate that the leaders of Guam have been trying to reevaluate their political status for more than 20 years. What, in your judgment, has been the principal difficulty that Guam has had in trying to improve its status?

Tenorio: One very simple reason, Howard. That is the fact that Guam is already part of America. In the case of the Northern Marianas, we were not part of America. So we are in a legal position to negotiate. But Guam being a territory of the United States since 1898, and why would an owner of a car want to negotiate away his own car?

Willens: So you think Guam doesn't have any political leverage?

- Tenorio: From a practical standpoint, from a legal standpoint, Guam is already part of the U.S. They could improve their relationship, but not through negotiation I believe. It's a laughing matter for the Congress to even think that Guam could negotiate an improved status when its status is already determined and it is a territory of the United States. So my own personal feeling is, and I've told this to several people from Guam, some key people there, there's no way that Guam can get commonwealth status for two basic reasons. One, it's already part of America. Secondly, I think the document, whatever they call it [the Commonwealth Act], has some provisions there that are very obnoxious, if not downright abusive to the principles of being a part of the United States. That is the so-called definition of Guamanians over there which excludes the white Americans. Even those who are half-Americans are going to be disenfranchised. You know, you don't do that, even to joke about that in front of the Congress. That's why I say that the provision in the document is kind of funny; I don't think Congress will accept that. I think it's unfortunate that they have this so-called flakey nationalistic attitude about becoming part of the U.S. Then again, the other group, the Chamorro Nation, (or whatever they call them) is disrupting the entire process.
- Willens: That is a bit of a diversion. But I was interested in your reactions to that because it's been much debated at conferences where representatives of the various insular areas have gotten together. Let me go back to 1973, and the topic of the level of U.S. financial assistance to the Commonwealth. At the third round of negotiations, the United States made an offer in the total amount of \$11.5 million, about \$7.5 million in government programs, \$3.0 million for capital improvements programs, and \$1.0 million for a development loan fund. Then on top of that they made certain representations about federal programs being available annually in the approximate amount of \$3.0 million dollars. The Marianas Political Status Commission did not agree to that at the time, and there were subsequent negotiations on that subject. What do you recall about the negotiations with respect to the level of U.S. financial assistance?
- Tenorio: Well, I think we had our own figures prepared by our economic advisers, principally Jim Leonard. His figures were, of course, much higher, not much, but higher than the U.S. offering. And also, it was the feeling within the Commission that amount was insufficient given the fact that the infrastructure, for example, during the Trust Territory period had just deteriorated. That in itself would require more than \$3 million a year to improve and to bring it up to the level where we could invite economic investments to start the island going in the right direction.
- Willens: One of Jim Leonard's initial working papers based on preexisting studies estimated that the Northern Marianas needed capital improvement projects in the range of \$47 million dollars over a period of five years in order to bring the infrastructure here up to a suitable level to support the economic development. Do you have any recollections of the feelings of the Commission members to the need for expanded infrastructure development?
- Tenorio: Yes, definitely, yes. In fact, I think this was one of the reasons why we took some more time to discuss financial assistance. I think there was a tentative agreement to the U.S. preliminary offering. At least, the Commission wasn't really rocking the boat about increasing it. I remember that we had to go back and reassess that and then asked the U.S. for specific concessions, increasing the capital improvement program funds, to allocate funds for Rota and Tinian, and also I believe to increase funds for the housing authority for housing programs.
- Willens: I have some of those figures available here. At the next round, in the fourth round, the United States increased its offer from \$11.5 to \$13.5, and they increased government

operations only by half a million, they increased capital improvements by a full million dollars each year, with \$500,000 allocated to each of Rota and Tinian and increased the development fund from \$1.0 million to \$1.5. Do you have any recollection of the actual negotiations between the members of the Commission and the U.S. delegation, about the amount of money that was needed according to the Marianas?

Tenorio: Well, yes. What I remember was that the U.S. kept telling us that there would be a whole bunch of other federal programs, and this is just the bare minimum that will be guaranteed. There will be funds from the Federal Highway [Administration], for example, from the Corps of Engineers, from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and from many other agencies involved, EPA for example, for wastewater and water pollution program. We did discuss those other programs, especially those extended to Guam.

Willens: You knew that was going to be the case?

Tenorio: Well, of course we did. We knew what laws were going to be applicable, what laws provide funding to the local government for infrastructure that would be in addition to the Covenant-guaranteed funds.

Willens: Did anyone try to make a more specific estimate of what these federal programs would be worth beyond the \$3.0 million?

Tenorio: I think the U.S. gave us a figure, but I don't remember what it was.

Willens: The figure was \$3.0 million, and I think it's fair to say that on the Commission's side, we were prepared to accept that figure, but believed that it might be much larger.

Tenorio: Yes, that's right.

Willens: Do you recall what, in fact, the level of federal programs turned out to be?

Tenorio: For CIP? For capital improvement?

Willens: No, in the Commonwealth, after it was effective, for CIP and other kinds of programs?

Tenorio: Well, I don't remember exactly what the figure was, but something like about \$10 million, I think.

Willens: I remember hearing once that in a single year, perhaps it was not a typical year, the federal funding on top of the guaranteed amount was in the range of \$28 million. That may have included construction of some major facility.

Tenorio: Yes, yes. I think for the typical so-called discretionary grants vs. allocated funds (if those are the proper terms), we could get both, depending on how aggressive we were and how good are our proposals were. We could get funds both ways.

Willens: Your recollection is that it may have averaged out around \$10 million?

Tenorio: Yes, that is what I recall. That was maybe a conservative figure on my part. I was thinking more along major areas of actual CIP, like water pollution control, environment protection programs, the Corps of Engineers programs for the harbor area, breakwater, the EDA program, which actually was one of the first programs that we took advantage of for various projects in the CNMI. That was the federal highway program we were eligible for, and we got some kind of a minimum amount, I think, every year.

Willens: Do you remember what ultimately persuaded the United States to increase its offer of a guaranteed financial assistance from \$11.5 million to the figures that ultimately ended up in the Covenant?

- Tenorio: Yes, I think it was through our own persuasion, the Commission's persuasion that this amount is not enough, even though it was going to be adjusted every year. Because of inflation the buying power of the dollar would decrease; that's why you got the inflationary factor built into it. And I think it was through our argument that this community is not just Saipan. There is Tinian and Rota and they are an active part of the Commission. Saipan's infrastructure is bad, but the situation on Rota and Tinian was terrible. There was practically nothing then in Rota and Tinian, and that's why the U.S. was persuaded to increase the amount.
- Willens: Do you remember a meeting at which individual members of the Commission each spoke briefly, but eloquently, about a particular need in the community, for example, health or education or infrastructure?
- Tenorio: I think, yes, I remember that. I don't know what brought that about, but I think probably when we got together we decided, well, let's kind of see who can present this subject better, as part of the strategy of persuading Ambassador Williams. I remembered we talked about that. In fact, I think I remember talking about CIP at that time.
- Willens: Do you remember whether the Commission was ever accused of by the Ambassador as having engaged in Armenian rug trading?
- Tenorio: I vaguely remember something like that. Yes, I think I do. Is that the way he put it?
- Willens: Well, I don't want to be a witness here. Do you remember how it came to be that a power barge entered into the negotiations for financial assistance?
- Tenorio: The power barge that was brought in here to provide us power after the typhoon?
- Willens: The point at which the U.S. delegation agreed to offer whatever it was, either \$13.5 million or \$14.0 million plus a power barge, and the power barge was considered surplus?
- Tenorio: Surplus, yes.
- Willens: Do you have any recollection of the power needs of the island at the time?
- Tenorio: Yes, I remember. I think our own island power source was always breaking down. I think it was after one typhoon when this power barge was brought over from Guam. It was an old one, but was in running condition, so it was parked over by Baker Dock. It was operating there for a long time. And, I think that's one of the key reasons why there was an increase in the funding for CIP, the lack of power and the need to increase the power capacity of the old power plant down at the port area because the one up at the Navy Pier was burned down. We talked about that being out of commission, so that we didn't have any power, even stand-by for that matter, so we brought in the power barge.
- Willens: And the power barge did become a facility available to the Northern Marianas?
- Tenorio: Yes, in fact we used it. It was a loan through the military or something. It was given to us for interim power, and then it became the general power system for us for a long time. It came here because of the burned-down facility up at Navy Pier. But that was one of the reasons why the CIP was increased—to provide us with the funds for a power plant. Some of these issues developed at the time; in fact, this situation just happened so we used it to our benefit.
- Willens: Turning to the question of Tinian, it was during the fifth round of negotiations that, to the Commission's surprise, Ambassador Williams announced that there was a change in the U.S. military plans. There was no immediate plan to develop the major base facility

on the island that had been originally described to the Commission and to the people of the Northern Marianas. What were your reactions to that U.S. change in plans?

Tenorio: I don't remember. Before I got into the Commission, I remember early discussion about this project in Tinian. It was supposed to be a major joint military build-up over there. Then, when I got into the picture, that was already discarded, I think, even before I got in. The U.S. had announced that it's not going to be putting up any major facility on Tinian. The project was shelved for the time being.

Willens: Did that influence the negotiations in any way, do you recall?

Tenorio: Yes, to some extent, it did, by way of lost job opportunities and construction activities. In fact, those elements actually contributed also to the U.S. agreeing to increase the overall financial assistance. We argued that all of these things had been planned for, and this is why our economic consultant advised us that there will be job opportunities, and all kinds of other developments, leading to more revenue coming in. Since that was not going to go through now, we were asking them for additional funds. I remember that part.

Willens: The United States still continued to want Tinian and there were unresolved issues, including two of particular importance. One was whether the land would be sold or leased, and the second one was the amount of money that would be paid for the right to use the Tinian acreage for military purposes. At a later stage of negotiations, you became a member of the Land Committee.

Tenorio: Yes, I became Chairman of the Land Committee.

Willens: Could you address those issues, briefly, beginning with the lease vs. sale issue. How strongly did the Commission feel about this issue?

Tenorio: The Commission felt very strongly that there shouldn't be any sale. In fact, we were actually strong in leasing it only for a minimum period. But then the U.S. convinced us that their policy was that they have to lease it long-term, and then to have an option. But the Commission was very strong against selling it outright, because there's no way for the future generation to recover that land. But at least if we lease it, even if for 100 years for example, it would eventually revert back to the next few generations to come. So there was a very strong feeling against sale.

Willens: Did you think the United States delegation was ultimately persuaded that the Commission would not sell the land?

Tenorio: From the beginning, the U.S. knew full well, and they weren't fooling us when they told us that they want to buy it, because they knew it's not for sale.

Willens: Do you think that was primarily a tactical strategy on their part?

Tenorio: It's a tactic, sure. It's a tactic; it's asking too much when you're expecting less than that. That's what they did. They wanted to buy it outright, and, as I say, the Commission didn't take that seriously.

Willens: How about the next issue—the question of what should be the level of compensation and, as part of that question, how should the parties negotiate this subject? There was some talk within the Commission about hiring an appraiser and, in fact, the Commission did retain an appraiser. What is your recollection of the negotiations on price?

Tenorio: I think the U.S. offered us an amount. I don't remember exactly what it was, but it was certainly much lower than \$15 million, and it's not just for Tinian, it's for all the leasehold areas, including the [Tanapag] harbor and Isley Field areas. Those are the

basic issues for the Land Committee. The U.S. offered something small because, in fact, their idea was to try and come to an agreement on something that is subjective. The Commission decided to hire an appraiser in Washington, D.C., Metro Metrics, I believe, at the recommendation of several people, including Jim Leonard and Jim White. They did an appraisal study using local transactions, especially Guam transactions, looking at Honolulu and other comparable places, and they came up with a recommendation that I think was much higher than the actual amount finally agreed upon. Certainly higher than the \$19.5 million that we agreed upon. Even with that appraisal amount, we had people in the Commission still saying its too low. We didn't even know how else to approach it, but we have to base it on something, and we did a fairly comprehensive analysis of the appraisal report. Jim White was involved with me on this, and who else, I guess it was Joe Cruz and Danny Muna who were the other committee members. We were the only three people there who were not involved in any kind of a transaction in Tinian. It was never mentioned that the committee members should be only those that do not have any interest, but I think that was pretty much understood. I didn't have any conflicts at all you know, and they knew how I felt about conflicts. Eventually we came to an agreement based on that report. I think at that time what helped us also was this undercurrent in the community, that the land is not for sale, it should be leased, and the U.S. offer was made public somehow. So eventually, when we came to a tentative agreement on a higher amount, which was based on an appraised value, it was accepted.

Willens: Did you think it was generally accepted in the community at the time as being a fair negotiated amount?

Tenorio: Yes, I think so. But you know, there were some other people that would always question the amount no matter what—one cent per square meter per year for the next hundred years, you know, something like that, it figured out to \$19 million. Divide \$19 million by 18,000 hectares, how many square feet is that, and then you break it down to one cent a square meter, but you know. We did justify those figures during the public education on the Covenant. But there was an undercurrent of concern by some of the opposition, even during the time we were negotiating.

Willens: Did you have any recollections of specific discussions with members of the U.S. delegation about the price issue, and whether they thought it was too high and the Commission was being unreasonable?

Tenorio: I remember talking with some military guys, mostly strategists, I guess, Col. Stout, was it Stout?

Willens: Colonel who? Dale Strait?

Tenorio: Dale Strait, and I think even Jim Wilson.

Willens: What do you recall either of them saying to you on this subject?

Tenorio: I think what they were saying was that in most jurisdictions the federal government owns the land, because it's a public project and serves a public need. This should be part of the voluntary contribution of the Northern Marianas people, who want to be part of America. I think I remember that. I don't think I'm wrong in that. This sentiment fairly comes back to my mind that you people should be grateful that you're going to be part of America, and part of that responsibility is to provide land for the defense of the United States.

Willens: That was all part of informal advice to you that the Commission should accept the U.S. offer?

- Tenorio: Yes, or it might be just some talk to the effect that you are going to benefit out of that because there will be activities over there and the U.S. presence will be there for the defense of the Commonwealth, and things like that.
- Willens: What did you say in response?
- Tenorio: I think I said back to them, well, in Hawaii, where I'm familiar with the land situation, the U.S. government, if it needs something, either negotiates with the Hawaiian government or takes it by eminent domain. I referred to the Bellows Air Force base.
- Willens: What Air Force base?
- Tenorio: Bellows was the Air Force base before, and Hickam Air Force base, I think, were two examples of U.S. getting land from the Hawaii state government, but not for free. Basically, I think that's what I said to them, as an example where the need for land would have to be justified. I also pointed out that the U.S. in other countries, I think I mentioned Spain and Japan, where there's a military base, the U.S. leased and paid for the land. Why should it be different over here in negotiating?
- Willens: Do you remember any specific incident involving Colonel Strait and Executive Director White during the course of the Commission's negotiations?
- Tenorio: I think there was some kind of fist fight, and Jim White knock him out, or is it the other way around? I remember something. It was in Rota, I think.
- Willens: Were you present at the time?
- Tenorio: Yes, yes. I couldn't recall where was it. I think it was in a bar.
- Willens: You think it was in a bar in Rota?
- Tenorio: I remember the incident, but I don't recall the place, ok?
- Willens: Do you remember what provoked it?
- Tenorio: Darnit, I wish I could remember that. It was a very funny situation, I think. We were laughing about it after.
- Willens: Do you remember what the Ambassador's reaction was?
- Tenorio: No.
- Willens: How would you generally describe the relationship between the Marianas Political Status Commission on the one hand, and the U.S. delegation on the other?
- Tenorio: I think it was fairly good. But there were some personality differences, and even among the consultants and the U.S. side, there was a little bit more friction between them than there was between us and them.
- Willens: Between the members of the Commission and the members of the U.S. delegation?
- Tenorio: Yes, there was some, but not much. But between the Commission's consultants and the U.S. delegation, they seemed to be picking on each other more. That's what I remembered.
- Willens: You mentioned the Land Committee. Are there any other issues that came before the Land Committee that you recall now as being of particular importance?
- Tenorio: Yes, I think the Land Committee also addressed the lease-back areas in connection with the Technical Agreement. I think we recommended to them the amount in the Tinian lease area. Then we talked about the specific port and harbor area where a certain portion

of the harbor has to be reserved for the local government's use and a portion of that is to be used by the United States. It would be leased to the U.S. but on a joint use basis, and that the development of that civilian portion would have to be assisted by the United States.

Willens: The Technical Agreement included numerous provisions that would affect the interaction between the civilian and the military communities that we thought at the time would develop on Tinian.

Tenorio: Yes, yes.

Willens: Now, with the benefit of hindsight, and in view of the fact that the United States has not used the land to any significant extent, what is your current view as to what the Commonwealth's position should be with respect to that land?

Tenorio: Well, the U.S. has already paid for it, you see, so one of our weaknesses, in asking to get it back, is that they're going to say well, we have already paid you the money, are you willing to give us that money back?

Willens: Do you know whether they've raised that position in negotiations?

Tenorio: No, you mean here, currently?

Willens: Yes.

Tenorio: Well, there have been some people here that are following up leasing back a portion of Tinian for commercial purposes. For other economic development uses, but not the entire island, yet. Nobody has really come up and said we want to take back the entire leased area. But I think the timing is right now. The U.S. really has nothing to lose by giving up Tinian completely. It's got nothing to lose.

Willens: On the grounds that they could take it by eminent domain if they had to in the future?

Tenorio: Yes, sure, yes. That would certainly be a very, very nice gesture if they could do this. There is quite a bit of large-scale development interest.

Willens: In Tinian?

Tenorio: In Tinian, for agricultural use and other kinds of industrial or commercial resort development.

Willens: Do you really think there is any serious interest in agricultural development on Tinian as distinct from tourist development?

Tenorio: Oh yes, definitely. Definitely. In fact, there was a small experimental agricultural program done there by Japanese. In fact, several groups have done something over there.

Willens: In recent years?

Tenorio: Yes, about seven years ago. There was a sorghum factory, a sorghum plantation.

Willens: Sorghum?

Tenorio: Sorghum's a substitute, a sugar substitute; instead of cane, you use sorghum. Sorghum is sucrose and much more. It's got much more versatility in terms of its use in various products, like medicinal and other things. A big company from Japan came out here and obtained some kind of use rights on a portion of Tinian and planted sorghum very successfully. But at the time, the sorghum price increased and then the sugar cane price came down, so there was more surplus sugar to buy from Philippines and other places, so they kind of dropped the project. But there have been other experiments there like guava farming and sour saps, sweet saps, farming, by Japanese concerns, but on a small scale

only. It's just an experiment. They found it quite good.

Willens: One other issue during the negotiations that loomed large in your subsequent years was the discussion of transitional planning. There was an ad hoc committee on transitional planning established at the third round, and it reported at the fourth round with respect to a program of transitional planning. Do you recall any major issues developing with respect to the nature of the transitional planning, either the elements that ought to go into it, or the costs of that planning effort?

Tenorio: Yes, I guess we discussed that at length during the fourth round. If I remember correctly, we set up a committee to address what was going to be submitted to the Congress for funding. We set up a committee to develop the organization for the particular planning office. We came up with a need to staff it first with various experts who would address the planning areas required before the establishment of the new government. Fiscal development planning, economic planning, constitutional convention planning, government organization plans, all of these things would eventually become elements of the plan. Yes, I remember discussing that, and then we eventually went to Congress and presented in front of both, I believe, Burton's committee and, I believe, Scoop Jackson's committee under Bennett Johnson.

Willens: Was it approved by Congress before the Covenant had been finally approved by Congress?

Tenorio: I believe it was.

Willens: I recall reading some material suggesting that Congress didn't want to act on it in advance of the Covenant, because it would look as though they were pre-judging.

Tenorio: As though they were pre-judging, yes, yes. I think it was approved immediately after the Covenant was signed in March 1976. In fact, I think the funding was authorized and then it was appropriated sometime in the following fiscal year.

Willens: Did you remember any differences of importance between the positions that the Marianas Commission took on the one hand, and the positions that the United States delegation took on the other hand, with respect to transitional planning?

Tenorio: No, I don't think there was much disagreement on how the plan should be set up and what it should address. I think we both basically agreed with the need to have planning so that before the new government comes into being you have all of these tools to work with, or preparation immediately after or before the installation of the new government, that would start the new government in a good way, in the right direction. So, there was no major disagreement. I think [that was] one thing that we discussed during the so-called board of directors meeting at that time. I guess Ed Pangelinan was involved in that.

Willens: Were you a member of that?

Tenorio: No, I wasn't a member. Herman Guerrero was, I guess, and three or four of them, including Joe Cruz. In terms of staffing it, the U.S. insisted on putting up somebody as their representative there, and we didn't like that because, hey, this is our own plan, but they eventually put up Steve Loftus. Remember Steve Loftus?

Willens: Yes, that's L-O-F-T-U-S. But, you in fact became the director?.

Tenorio: I became the Director, yes, but he was my deputy.

Willens: Loftus served as your deputy?

Tenorio: Yes.

- Willens: When did you assume those responsibilities, approximately?
- Tenorio: I think that was in 1976.
- Willens: Shortly after the signing of the Covenant?
- Tenorio: Shortly after the signing of the Covenant. Yes, I think it was the latter part of 1976.
- Willens: Probably.
- Tenorio: I resigned from the Marianas Legislature at that time. The transitional legislation became effective late in 1976, October or November.
- Willens: One last question about the negotiations, and that refers to the actual drafting of the Covenant. At the third round in December of 1973 when you were a member of the Commission, the United States delegation delivered to the Commission near the end of the session a draft Covenant. The Commission did not react to it, because the consultants and the members had not had a chance to study it. At the next round, in May of 1974, the consultants developed for the Commission a different version of the agreement, and a very substantial legal memorandum explaining the differences and ultimately, after the Commission discussed it, the Commission authorized the presentation of an alternative status agreement to the United States. Did you have any recollection of the reaction of the United States delegation to that decision by the Commission to draft its own version of an agreement?
- Tenorio: Yes. I think Ambassador Williams was very upset at that, if I remember.
- Willens: Do you remember any expression by him in a meeting or in private to you on that subject?
- Tenorio: I don't know, Howard, for sure, but I remember him getting very aggravated about it, like saying, "This is outrageous. This document does not represent our understandings." Something to that effect.
- Willens: How did you feel about the general strategy of having the Commission develop its own...
- Tenorio: I think it's good. I think it was good. I think it was good that you folks took the initiative to develop something based on your understanding of the process and the details of the discussion. The U.S., of course, has its own very simplistic version, which is what really bothered me about the U.S. side. Every time I read that position paper, it has very little substance.
- Willens: Very what?
- Tenorio: The substance is very little. Their write-up on a complicated subject tries to make it so simple, like, don't worry about it, we'll fix it up later on. But you folks were very comprehensive in your write-up and your analysis. Of course, the U.S., I think, at the time when you were drafting this thing, they felt somewhat insecure that your lawyers are really studying the subject very, very carefully for the Commission, whereas the U.S. wanted to kind of gloss things over very quickly. That's the comparison I see between their write-up and your write-up.
- Willens: There was a disagreement, generally, as to whether the agreement should be a very specific legalistic document, as some people described it, or whether it should be more of a general statements of principles. The United States, to be fair to them, wanted to have a more general statement of principles, and then leave the details to be implemented

subsequently; whereas, the Commission, on advice of counsel, felt that the negotiations ought to produce a detailed and comprehensive agreement.

Tenorio: We wanted more detail. That's how we felt. That's what I mean when I compared your write-up and their write-up. I've read some of their drafts, their own positions, and it's very simple.

Willens: But it turned out to be a fairly controversial, strategic decision by the Commission, and that's why I'm asking you.

Tenorio: Yes, I remember the subject, and I know the Ambassador was very concerned about it. He was very disturbed.

Willens: After the 1974 election, there were some changes on the Commission that you made reference to earlier. One person that we haven't referred to is Juan L. G. Cabrera, who came on the Commission as a result of the elections and some of the changes that took place at the time. Just to review the situation as I understand it, the people who came on were Oscar Rasa, Mr. Cabrera, and Manny Sablan. The people who went off were Herman Q. Guerrero, Oly Borja, who surrendered his seat to Ed Pangelinan, and Felipe Salas had gone off because he had assumed a position, I believe, as a judge.

Tenorio: As a judge, yes, yes, that's right.

Willens: Just to pause for a moment about Mr. Salas. What was your general recollection of his participation on the Commission?

Tenorio: I don't even remember whether, by the time I got in, he wasn't there already?

Willens: He was there for two sessions in which you participated. The third and the fourth sessions. I gather from what you say, you don't have a very distinct recollection of his participation.

Tenorio: No, no I don't. I didn't remember.

Willens: Do you have any recollection of Mr. Cabrera's participation?

Tenorio: No, I don't.

Willens: Do you have any recollection about Mr. Rasa's participation; you've made some reference to him earlier?

Tenorio: Yes, most of the time he was absent.

Willens: You remember Oscar Rasa being absent?

Tenorio: Yes, most of the time.

Willens: Did he actually come on to the Commission in time for the December 1974 session which took place after the election, or did he only come on at the very final session in February of 1975? You will recall that the fifth session was divided into two portions, in part because of the need for time, the results of the election, some drafting problems, and other issues.

Tenorio: I don't remember Oscar really making any direct or indirect contribution, or remember any kind of things to highlight what his participation was.

Willens: He became a strong opponent of the Covenant during the plebiscite campaign, is that correct?

Tenorio: Yes, yes, but that's outside of the Commission. Inside the Commission, I don't think that he was actually vocal at all. I don't remember him coming to the session that often.

- Willens: What were his main bases for opposing the Covenant?
- Tenorio: He wanted the CNMI to be part of Micronesia, to maintain Micronesian unity. That's his strongest basis. I think you know that Oscar's got a hang-up on American government, I don't know for what reason, but he seems to have that hang-up. Maybe he doesn't trust them; he doesn't like Ambassador Williams. He thinks the guy is a CIA agent or something. He's got a paranoid attitude. Yes, I remember him making fun of it, saying, "Yes, I've been followed by CIAs or FBIs around." He's always looking behind his back shoulder to see who's following him. He thinks Ambassador Williams was a CIA agent. He doesn't have any objective attitude toward the Covenant. He's got more of a disruptive attitude, to just say, "Hell, you know, you guys don't know what you're talking about. We should be with Micronesia." I think that a lot of the concerns that he and his group had with the Covenant were based on his feeling that we should continue to be part of Micronesia.
- Willens: Did he campaign on that position during the 1974 elections when he and you were both elected to the Congress?
- Tenorio: No.
- Willens: He did not express those views?
- Tenorio: No, no, he did not. We didn't win on the issue of being anti-Covenant candidates.
- Willens: What were the issues that you think carried the day for you in that election?
- Tenorio: I think people wanted a little change. They wanted a change in the politics.
- Willens: Had the other party just been in power too long?
- Tenorio: Yes.
- Willens: You have referred to instances where you met in private with Ambassador Williams to discuss certain aspects of the negotiations. Do you have a recollection of any specific such meetings?
- Tenorio: One important meeting that I remember very clearly took place at the Hyatt Hotel. This was towards the very end of the Covenant negotiations. As a matter of fact, it was actually the day before the signing by the Commission and the Ambassador of the Covenant.
- Willens: It was the day before the actual signing?
- Tenorio: The day before the actual signing here at Mt. Carmel?
- Willens: Yes.
- Tenorio: And I think up to that point the Ambassador was still very concerned, I guess, that Dr. Palacios and I were going to hold out. You know, he had already identified Oscar [Rasa] and Felix Rabauliman as two who would probably not sign. But he was kind of concerned, I believe, about that and he thought that he would call me and Dr. Palacios.
- Willens: The two of you went together?
- Tenorio: The two of us went together to that room. I forgot the room number but it's on the left wing of the Hyatt Hotel, then the Continental I guess.
- Willens: But in fact you had voted as Commission members to support the Covenant just a few days earlier.
- Tenorio: Yes, sure, sure.

- Willens: Why did you think he had this concern?
- Tenorio: I don't know. Maybe he heard something that wasn't true, or he just wanted to make sure, or maybe he want to pat us on the back and say you guys did a great job. Essentially, what went on during the discussion that night with Dr. Palacios was that I remember him saying to us, "I need a few good men only." Whatever that means, I guess that means he's relying on us to go through with this thing. We voted for the Covenant already at the time when we finally discussed. He was still, I guess, concerned because he knew that two guys definitely were not going to support it, were not going to sign it, would not be in the signing ceremony and he just wanted to make sure that we show up. So he called us up. I went there with Dr. Palacios.
- Willens: What was your reaction to the meeting?
- Tenorio: Well we just told him that we had gone through this [negotiating] process and think all of the things that we had requested to be included in the draft Covenant were pretty much accommodated. We were committed to go forward and sign the agreement, and he should not worry about it.
- Willens: One of the problems that developed in February 1975 was that the Ambassador and U.S. delegation were kept waiting for several days while the Marianas Political Status Commission was considering internally certain issues. The most important of those additional issues was the request by Rota and Tinian for a bicameral legislature. Did you recall that particular discussion within the Commission?
- Tenorio: I don't know. I have to think back over it. I'm not so sure as to the details of the meeting. I couldn't say.
- Willens: Do you remember any other private meetings that you had with Ambassador Williams, Mr. Wilson or other members of the U.S. delegation during the negotiations?
- Tenorio: Well, we had lunch several times, of course, with some of the members. I don't recall who they were. But it was just casual discussion. I don't remember anything substantive discussed that really rings the bell with respect to the issues. In most cases, as I have said, the discussions were at social gatherings or luncheons where nothing substantial was discussed that I can recall. Most of the time the substance of the issues was discussed during Commission meetings.
- Willens: You mentioned that both Oscar Rasa and Felix Rabauliman had indicated that they did not intend to sign the Covenant. You spoke earlier in the interview about Mr. Rasa's reasons for not wanting to support the Covenant. Do you believe that Mr. Rabauliman's decision not to sign the Covenant represented the views of the Carolinian community?
- Tenorio: No. Personally I did not feel that Felix's negative attitude toward the Covenant actually was shared by the majority of the Carolinian community. And certainly if that was the case, they would have shown an overwhelming rejection on their part in some of the districts of the Covenant during the plebiscite, but I don't think that was the case. I think Felix was much more concerned about, I believe, the history. He wanted to make sure that he's not labeled as one that wanted to disintegrate Micronesia, where most of the Carolinians came from. To him that probably was an important reason for his rejection.
- Willens: A very highly personal view, as you understand it?
- Tenorio: We talked about it.
- Willens: Do you remember any conversations with him on the subject?

- Tenorio: Not specifically.
- Willens: You mentioned the plebiscite. What role did you assume during the campaign for the Covenant before the plebiscite?
- Tenorio: Well, I played a very active role. Ed Pangelinan and I were running the, what was it, the public education program. This was funded by the Legislature and I was quite active (almost on a nightly basis) going around the community conducting public hearings. Basically, I was the one that opened the meeting. And then we had several of the Commission members together with us responding to questions. I was the target of the entire process.
- Willens: Why were you the target?
- Tenorio: Well, I guess I was one of the most vocal persons to support it. Before going to the U.S. Congress, we had several months of plebiscite education. I don't remember what my role was, whether I was a chairman or not. Eddie was the Chairman of the Commission and I was the senator representing the Northern Marianas. At that time, I still in the Congress of Micronesia. But for some reason I don't remember my actual position. I was very deeply involved in it. I guess it was through my own commitment to support the Covenant and go out and do it. A lot of people were actually making personal attacks during the campaign, if you turn your back on the Republican or the Territorial side. So I told them that this approach was meaningless. This whole process was going to go through and I'm going to try my best to educate everybody and inform people about the Covenant because I helped negotiate it. I don't remember what my actual official position was at that time.
- Willens: Was it a difficult chore to try to explain this complicated legal document to people out in the villages?
- Tenorio: It was very difficult.
- Willens: How could you make the choice an understandable one for the average citizen in the Northern Marianas?
- Tenorio: We went through a fairly organized methodology in presenting the Covenant. We go item by item, go article by article, and if necessary even section by section, and we explain, of course, why this whole thing is going on, why was there a negotiation, and why we needed to change our status. We started with the provisions of the Charter and the Trusteeship Agreement with United Nations and then told them that we need to choose a political status in accordance with the Trusteeship Agreement and as provided for under the Charter. We said that the U.S. was obligated to do this under its responsibility as the Trustee of all of Micronesia. We went through the Covenant in a lot of detail to try to educate the people on each section. One crucial point, of course, was the need for political change. We didn't want to continue to be part of Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.
- Willens: That was one point.
- Tenorio: Secondly, the people had already indicated in many different ways that they wanted to be part of the United States through a closer relationship. The Covenant certainly provided for that kind of aspiration, and so it's what the people had wanted. That's what this Covenant was all about. They would talk about the economic advantages to being a part of the United States. Just look at Guam. A lot of our people looked at Guam, and they're prospering over there. Guam is at a high level of economic development and we wanted to attain that kind of level as well, not necessarily as a political standard, but so far as the economic aspects were concerned. We know what the political status is going to be. We don't really say that in a way that would make us sound like we're showing off. But we

knew that the Covenant provided for a much higher level of political affiliation with the United States. And certainly the economic aspect was very attractive.

Willens: Were any opponents of the Covenant at these meetings?

Tenorio: Oh definitely. In fact, I'll say in the majority of cases we had opponents, even ladies, women that were my very close friends, personal friends. In many cases they were not there to attack me personally, but they're there to ask very pointed questions. Like for example, why are you leasing Tinian for 100 years for such a small sum of money? Is it worth it to get a political status like the commonwealth and yet sacrifice our valuable land for the rest of this generation? And that's a very difficult thing to do. So what we try to do is say, let's observe the sacrifices that American citizens make. Your eminent domain, you know, the taking of land for public needs. And in our case, we negotiated. They would talk about the other economic benefits that would come about through this process of having the U.S. establish a military base over there, and all kinds of construction would start and things like that. It's not easy. There's no one answer to any one of the questions, that's for sure. We tried to provide as much information as possible in the public education program.

Willens: Some of the opponents of the Covenant maintained that they were pro-commonwealth but they thought that a better deal could have been negotiated.

Tenorio: Sure, sure. There was that group.

Willens: Did you believe that they really believed that there could be better terms negotiated with the United States?

Tenorio: Well, the better terms they were talking about actually involved an expansion of the economic provisions in the Covenant, for example, the financial assistance. They wanted more.

Willens: They wanted more money.

Tenorio: They wanted more money. They didn't think that \$50 million was enough to carry us through for the next seven years, because everybody was very conscious of the deficient infrastructure, the insufficient services being provided, and all of this would take money to improve. Some even questioned the minimum wage; why aren't we applying the minimum wage provision of the United States? You know, if we are going to become part of America, why don't we do it? Of course, the obvious answer is that, at this point in time, our level of economic growth is not prepared to absorb that substantial minimum wage provision that they're talking about. So we're going to have to start slowly and grow in accordance with the ability of business to carry through. I think in many cases the answers that we provided were very satisfactory. That's why I believe that through the success of the political education program we were able to garner a fairly high percentage of votes—78 percent of the voting public. Almost 90 percent of the voters cast a vote and 78 percent of that approved the Covenant. That's a very large majority.

Willens: Yes, it is. How would you assess Erwin Canham's performance as Plebiscite Commissioner?

Tenorio: Excellent. I felt the guy did a tremendously good job in being very impartial about this thing. I mean very patient. A lot of times they would point a finger at him, say that he's part of the American group, and that he's trying to sway the plebiscite result in favor of the U.S. But I didn't think that was in fact what happened. In fact he was very impartial. He's a very educated, very seasoned person and he's got all kinds of experience that people respect. So his role was tremendously objective and successful. For an old man, he took the time to come down and explain things. He was invited to several group sessions to explain what was happening. He was overall a very successful Plebiscite Commissioner.

- Willens: Let's turn to the consideration of the Covenant in Congress. You mentioned that, after it was approved in the plebiscite, you played a role in lobbying for the Covenant in the United States Congress. Did you appear as a witness before the House Subcommittee that Congressman Burton put together?
- Tenorio: Oh yes, yes. I was there actually as a member of the Commission and also as a current member of the Congress of Micronesia Senate. My role there was to play both parts.
- Willens: What do you mean?
- Tenorio: Essentially, well as a Commission member and speaking on behalf of the people of the Commonwealth, this is what they wanted. This is demonstrated through their own voting that they overwhelmingly wanted to become a part of the U.S. through the mechanism of the Covenant. At the same time, I was there to try and neutralize some of the opposition in the Senate based on the Congress of Micronesia concern regarding who has the right to negotiate.
- Willens: Was that still an issue?
- Tenorio: Oh, yes. It was still an issue. There were all kinds of letters and things sent out by the president then.
- Willens: The president of the Congress of Micronesia?
- Tenorio: Yes.
- Willens: But there had already had been an unsuccessful lawsuit, as you know, the day before the signing raising that issue. But your recollection is that the Congress of Micronesia or their supporters were still trying to persuade the members of the U.S. Congress that these separate negotiations were not on the level?
- Tenorio: That's right. There was still that overhanging issue. Of course they didn't appear in Congress to testify; none of the Congress of Micronesia members actually appeared. They sent letters to the committee essentially opposing the passage of the Covenant because of that issue.
- Willens: But didn't they eventually before the Senate acted, I may be wrong, say they were no longer opposed and took a more neutral position.
- Tenorio: I think after the House vote, then they became fairly neutral in the Senate hearings. Of course, on the House side Burton was there, and he was able to get the Covenant through his committee and then through unanimous consent of the House of Representatives. So it was a fairly easy effort as far as lobbying is concerned, because I think most of the members of Congress then were very sympathetic. I'm sure that there was some communication to the appropriate committees of the House, not only the Interior Committee but also other congressional committees that were alerted about the Covenant coming up for a vote.
- Willens: On the Senate side of the U.S. Congress, there was opposition expressed both from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate Armed Services Committee. Do you have any recollection as to what was the basis for that opposition?
- Tenorio: I certainly have some recollection, especially regarding the Foreign Relations Committee where I guess the designated chairman was Senator Pell from Rhode Island. I remember going over there as a member from the Congress of Micronesia to testify on the Covenant. One of the questions that Senator Pell asked me, and it's in the record, was where did I get the money to travel to the United States to appear before the committee to support the Covenant. And I told him that the money came from our taxpayers. That the taxpayers

paid for my trip over there and that U.S. funds were not involved. I think that what he was trying to get at was whether there's been some favors being done by the U.S. side to get us over there. But I told him that no, that wasn't the case. Then I guess he asked me how much tax we collected and I don't remember what it was, but I said that our people pay taxes. The other comments that I remember him talking about were quite antagonistic; I remember Pell was a very strong opponent to the Covenant. One of the comments that he made was that, you know, these Northern Marianas are here and they voted at a very high percentage to become a part of America. If the U.S. takes the policy of inviting everybody to be a part of the United States because they voted for it, well maybe the Canary Islands also, or the Cayman Islands, if they voted tomorrow in favor, then we should also endorse it. That kind of argument. I made a comment in response to the effect that we are different. We have been under United States control for a long time under the Trusteeship; we were educated under the U.S. educational system; we know about Jack and Jill went up the hill. I think I said that on the record and that we are all so Americanized that we have no other way to go. Where else can we go? We can't go to Japan, or any other nation for that matter. The close tie-in as far as education and the upbringing of the people being exposed to the American way. And secondly, of course, the decision by the people is in accordance with the Trusteeship Agreement, which entitles us to self-government or independence. And we chose self-government under the flag of the United States.

Willens: There was some concern expressed in the Senate hearings about the fragmentation of the Trust Territory and the fact that it would have been better if the Northern Marianas had remained part of it.

Tenorio: Oh, yes. It seemed to the Senate that there was a strong argument in favor of not passing the Covenant, because they look at Micronesia as a whole as a Trust Territory, and contend that it should be kept together so that you don't disrupt the so-called Micronesian unity. Then our answer to that was that, you know, our people have elected a different way of affiliating, a different way of choosing self-government, and this was demonstrated through historical events over so many years. The Congress and the United Nations should not force the Northern Marianas to become a part of Micronesia because we don't want to. And that was also reflected on the record.

Willens: What do you remember about the actual signing ceremony at the White House on March 24, 1976? Do you have any personal recollection of that historic event?

Tenorio: Well, it was certainly very historic. I was up front there on the left side of the President. I think what we did first was presented him a symbol of the Commonwealth. It was a locally carved bull cart, bull and cart. I think that was presented, you know the Chamorro old transportation with a cart, wooden cart, and the bull pulling it?

Willens: Okay.

Tenorio: You don't remember that?

Willens: No.

Tenorio: Sure. We presented that to Ford during the ceremony and then, of course, the Covenant signing. All the key members of the staff of the Congress and the committee members were there. Especially Burton was there, Ambassador Williams was there. I still have a picture of that with Ford signing the Covenant. There was shuffling in the back on the Congressional side because the Marianas was on the left side of the President and on the right side was the Congressional members, Burton, Shirley Pettis, I guess Lagomarsino

was there and Mead and Burton and Ambassador Williams, Hiram Fong was there also. Several other guys, Senate people.

Willens: I remember that there was considerable competition to get into the picture.

Tenorio: Definitely, like I say shuffling. Yes. There was shuffling to get as exposed as they want to be.

Willens: My recollection is that the Northern Marianas politicians were every bit as successful as the U.S. politicians.

Tenorio: Yes. Actually, we looked pretty good. I got a copy of that photo from the White House on that.

Willens: Yes, I have one also.

Tenorio: I thought that was interesting. One minute of trying to get proper positioning. But you know, the ceremony was kind of brief. The President talked about the Commonwealth, our Covenant and political history, and the eventual passage by the U.S. Congress and the signing. It was a very historic moment.

Willens: Well, almost immediately thereafter you became involved in transitional efforts. When was it decided that you would end up operating as the director of the transitional office?

Tenorio: There was some kind of advance understanding because of my involvement in the Covenant negotiation, the Congress of Micronesia, as well as also being technically oriented. There was some preliminary consensus by the members of the Commission.

Willens: Both from the U.S. and the Marianas?

Tenorio: The U.S. and the Marianas and the Legislature agreed that I would be appointed, so it was actually no surprise when I got appointed.

Willens: Had you begun to do any work with respect to the transitional program before the actual signing?

Tenorio: Yes. We developed, I guess with a joint effort there with some members of the Ambassador's group, Jim Wilson I believe, and I don't remember the others.

Willens: Well, there had been an extensive effort during the negotiations to produce a planning program and was that essentially the starting point?

Tenorio: That was the starting point. The reason for developing that was to present that budget to the Congress immediately after the signing of the Covenant in order to meet the budget cycle. We submitted that and I went to Congress to explain the transitional planning and justify the attendant cost.

Willens: Well, it must have been operational very soon, because I remember that my law firm was identified to be the consultant to the Constitutional Convention sometime in May of 1976. So we were looking toward the Constitutional Convention sometime in the fall.

Tenorio: Right, it was in March when the Covenant was signed and immediately thereafter I think the separate administration Secretarial Order was issued. Even prior to that, there was fairly a good planning effort being done to establish the transition office as soon as possible. I think it was in May or June when I got in.

Willens: Well, what do you remember being the principal issues of substance during the transitional program?

Tenorio: Well, there were a lot of issues there. We were tasked to do several major things. One is the development of the fiscal development master plan, economic development plan, government reorganization (that's a separate study), constitutional convention, and then the formulation of a proposed legislation program to be introduced as soon as possible when the new government comes into being. There were four major issues: Development of the fiscal master plan, economic plan, government reorganization plan, and constitutional convention.

Willens: Regarding the economic plan, there had been more than 10 years of studies of one kind or another going back to the Nathan Associates study. Were any of those earlier studies useful and ultimately implemented in part?

Tenorio: You mean the OTSP plan, or other plans before that?

Willens: There were other plans before that. In fact, some people have suggested that there were numerous plans developed for economic development in the Marianas, but that none of them had been implemented because funds had never been made available.

Tenorio: That's right.

Willens: And I guess I'm asking you whether your office started from scratch to develop a new plan or whether some of these earlier plans were useful?

Tenorio: I think some of the earlier plans were useful to the extent that they collected and organized data that actually was the basis for the previous plans. So this information and statistics were quite useful in the new office coming up with some preliminary discussion papers on the various aspects of the economic program, as well as, of course, as the fiscal development master plan for infrastructure, public facilities, and use of public lands. We did look at studies that actually were being implemented, like a sewer master plan, a water master plan.

Willens: Are these plans that were in fact implemented after Commonwealth was officially begun in January 1978?

Tenorio: Well, not exactly.

Willens: Which of the plans that your office supervised and funded were implemented in a significant respect?

Tenorio: Well, the fiscal development master plan definitely, and the utilities plan.

Willens: Those are two different plans?

Tenorio: Well, fiscal development includes old facilities inclusive of utilities. But the ones that we developed were plans that were actually extensions in some cases on Saipan, for example, of projects that were started by the Trust Territory government and then funded under the Covenant and continued on. The sewage plan, for example, previously was just up to Puerto Rico.

Willens: It includes all the priorities with respect to capital improvement projects?

Tenorio: Yes, right, right.

Willens: Infrastructure generally?

Tenorio: Infrastructure and public government facilities, such as buildings, classrooms, auditoriums, things of this type.

Willens: It's your recollection now that what emerged from your office was implemented in significant respect?

- Tenorio: Oh yes, yes. And the funny thing about it is that one of the primary missions of OTSP was to develop those fiscal development master plans in accordance with the available funds over the next seven years. So we budgeted practically every single project, as you remember, project by project to be implemented on an annual basis using the funds from the Covenant agreement.
- Willens: You did not assume any additional funds?
- Tenorio: We assumed other funds, like highway for example which has a budget in the master plan, but we looked at highway as something that would be supplemented by federal highway funds which the CNMI was eligible for immediately upon the signing of the Covenant.
- Willens: Well, when you became Lieutenant Governor in 1982, what was your understanding then of the extent to which of these plans had been implemented during the previous four years?
- Tenorio: The previous four years were too political. Somehow the former Governor had a personal, I guess, dislike for me for some reason. But we tried to put the master plan to the Legislature for adoption and I think the Legislature had adopted the master plan to be implemented by the first government. But then the Governor just threw it away. He never really formally adopted it as a working guideline for fiscal development. He would just went ahead and did piecemeal projects.
- Willens: Did he develop some alternative master plan?
- Tenorio: No. There was no alternative. He and the Legislature just appropriated funds for power development, for example, a power plant, and pet projects like sidewalk or bikeways, which were really not called for initially as priority projects.
- Willens: Was there any controversy about his rejection of the master plan?
- Tenorio: Oh yes, there was controversy. You know, here we spent \$1.8 million to do the master plan and then it was just never adopted.
- Willens: Well, what was Governor Camacho's explanation for his rejection of the plan?
- Tenorio: I don't think he explained it. I don't think he explained it. He just went ahead and said he's the Governor, so he does just what he wants to do when he wants to do it. So I guess the first major things that he did (and he did not want to acknowledge) was to follow one of the master plan's recommendations to upgrade the power plant.
- Willens: Upgrade the power plant?
- Tenorio: Yes. So they went ahead and had Burns & Rowe do the so-called turnkey project—designing a new power plant and then constructing it. This is the second phase, the phase I power plant.
- Willens: Is that a firm you mentioned?
- Tenorio: Yes. Burns & Rowe was the consulting engineer for the first government. They developed the engineering plan for the construction of the first power plant.
- Willens: What was the state of planning when you assumed office as Lieutenant Governor?
- Tenorio: It was completed. The first power plant cost about \$8 million. Actually we needed \$15 million. This was an over-ceiling request so we went through the U.S. Congress. I don't know how it came about, but it was part of the CIP money from the Covenant, but must of it came from the federal government. We had actually asked for \$15 million, but through some crazy testimony by some members of the first government, Congress just

said well, we're going to give you \$8 million. So we got \$8 million for about three units of 725 megawatts Mitsubishi engines. And that was the end of it. Then afterwards we were able to get more funds to expand. But that was the major portion of the master plan which was implemented by the first government. When I got into office we concentrated on water development. Water development was a priority then because the water never for the first four years ever improved at all. In fact, it went from bad to worse.

Willens: I just read a letter recently you wrote in 1973 where you pointed out that you boiled some of your own water for safety purposes. But you kept it quiet and you were taking issue with some other correspondents.

Tenorio: Oh, yes. This was 1970 or was it 1980?

Willens: This was in the early 1970s, but water supply and reliability had been a major issue under the Trust Territory Administration. Together with power outages and quality of water, were those the principal deficiencies that influenced the quality of life here in the Marianas?

Tenorio: Oh, yes. Definitely. After we took office in 1982, I remember I was the author of an executive order declaring war against poor water.

Willens: But you were the hydrologist?

Tenorio: Yes. Right, right. So you know I told them that within a six month period, we're going to have 24 hours water. Well, we did. We actually achieved that goal, but not for a long time. What happened then was that we had a major drought the year after. It was the El Nino effect in 1983, which actually screwed things up so badly and nobody could do anything about it. Guam was dry, Yap was having fires, and in fact all of Micronesia had major, major water shortage problems. But on Saipan we didn't have as serious problem because of what we did in 1982. We drilled something like 30 wells, deep wells, and these wells were tapping underground reservoirs that do not dry up like exposed reservoirs. What happens is that the volume of fresh water decreases over a pumping period, because there's no recharge, so you end up pumping brackish water but it's wet. And what people wanted at the time was wet water. They don't really care about quality, because they don't drink tap water in the first place anyway. Our mission there was to try and provide as much volume as possible knowing that it would be brackish because our water system and lines are very delicate. Very delicate. The water lines are very delicate with no rainfall recharge for even a year's period to build up the water table above normal or natural level which would tend to deteriorate the water quality to the point where it become very salty. But we drilled these wells and it carried us through the El Nino effect of 1983 and then it got better in 1984. But then substantial developments was actually taking place, accelerated growth and all kinds of hotels and housing communities were popping all over the island through the homesteading program. We had a hard time catching up and trying to provide everybody water, so the water services again kind of dropped down a little bit.

Willens: When did the development really sort of take off? Was it in the early 1980s? Was it after you took office?

Tenorio: Yes, it was after we took office. One of the first things I signed into law, when the Governor was out of the Commonwealth, was a law enacted by the legislature repealing the Foreign Investment Act. I forgot what the number was, but it's the Foreign Investment Act. It was a very restrictive law under which the business investor had to go through a very, very rigid scrutiny by a foreign investment board in each of the entities of Micronesia before they could get permission to operate. Not only that, there's a requirement for mandatory 20

- percent ownership by Micronesians in order for the business to be approved. So we did away with that law; we repealed it completely.
- Willens: But at the time you took office, had there been any substantial Japanese investment at any island?
- Tenorio: No. There was the Grand Hotel; it was one.
- Willens: The Saipan Continental had been built in 1974 or 1975?
- Tenorio: Yes, right. The Intercontinental was built by an American company. In fact, it was Pan American that actually started it.
- Willens: That was the Intercontinental.
- Tenorio: That was the Intercontinental.
- Willens: Which was the next major hotel?
- Tenorio: The next one was the Grand Hotel.
- Willens: The Grand Hotel, which was Japanese financed?
- Tenorio: Yes, Japanese financed. And then the Hafa Adai became Japanese-owned thereafter. Remember it was a small hotel before they took it over and it became PDI—Pacific Development, Inc.—and then the Japanese money pumped into it and they started to build. And those were the four major hotels.
- Willens: What happened after the change in the foreign investment provisions?
- Tenorio: After 1982, when there was that change, investors were free to come in and apply for a business permit. At that time one of the policies we implemented (although it was not in writing) was to say to investors that you can develop the hotels and other projects so long as you provide your own utilities.
- Willens: That was not a legal requirement?
- Tenorio: It was not a legal requirement. But so long as you can do that and wait until the government catches up with you to sell you the power, sewer and water, that was enough incentive for them. This is all they want. They just wanted the government to approve the project and let them go. And that's why a lot of other investments came in quickly.
- Willens: Did your political party have control of both houses of the Commonwealth Legislature during your tenure?
- Tenorio: Not all the time. We had a change in political power in the Legislature, I think two times. During our first years it was a Republican-controlled legislature. Both the Senate and the House.
- Willens: For the first two years?
- Tenorio: For the first two years. I don't remember who was the President then?
- Willens: My question really is, when you didn't have full political control, what was the style of your Administration in trying to deal with those political differences?
- Tenorio: We didn't really have any hard time at all. In fact, because the Governor was a guy with a good personality, he makes everybody happy. I mean he's that kind of person. So he gets along, and we got along with the Legislature overall regardless of who the leadership was. So we didn't really have any serious problem with the leadership in the Legislature over

the eight year period that we dealt with them on the major development programs that we wanted to push through. We had very good cooperation with both of them.

Willens: What were the principal accomplishments of your Administration other than the one you mentioned with respect to the foreign investment provision?

Tenorio: Well, the infrastructure was pretty much taken care of. In other words, we had upgraded the infrastructure. The water was upgraded, the power plant was upgraded, and sewer development started to expand. We didn't concentrate too much on roads and highways because we were more interested in getting other type of infrastructure built—like schools. We built a lot of schools, high schools, classrooms, and through federal funds we were able to do some road work and some community projects like a gymnasium.

Willens: As part of the economic development, the increase in alien laborers came about. Did you have any policy for dealing with growing numbers of alien workers?

Tenorio: Yes. At the time when we took office in 1982, the alien labor population was not that great. The two industries that had fairly large alien populations were the hotel industry and the construction industry. Then I think several years after (I don't remember exactly what year it was but it must be just toward the end of our first term) in 1986 or towards the end 1985, I believe we started the garment industry.

Willens: How did that come about?

Tenorio: The garment industry was subject to the so-called Head Note 3A provision in our Covenant. We were always looking to find ways to invite foreign investment

Willens: Why was it that the garment industry had not been attracted to the island at an earlier time?

Tenorio: I don't know how to put it. Maybe the first Governor was just not too interested in seeing a lot of alien workers on island. Either that or the investors at that time were afraid to approach this Administration to invest. Because, if you remember, at that time investment interest was very low during the first Administration.

Willens: Why was that?

Tenorio: Because these guys wanted to pick and choose who should invest. Everybody had to go through his office—to kneel and kowtow to please him. He was that bad. And he had somebody who would advise him whom to approve, who not to approve. So people were very hesitant to come in. Genuine investors had to go through political connections in order to get their investment interest approved. So sad. You know afterwards we repealed that act, but at that time it was still in effect. So there was a mechanism to prevent people from coming in that the Governor had. So investment was very nominal. In fact, I'll say this, the first Governor wanted to set up his own Chamber of Commerce because he didn't like the Chamber of Commerce because at that time it was controlled by Joeten. He maintained Joeten was his opponent during the first gubernatorial election. So they analyzed this so-called personal conflict. It was sad that the first four years was actually not much. If you look at the overall revenue collection during 1978 to 1981 versus 1981 to 1985, you'd see maybe a fivefold difference.

Willens: A fivefold difference?

Tenorio: Yes, from \$12 million to \$60 million. And then over a 10 year period we were able to get over \$100 million. But it just shows that the economic growth in the first four years was very nil. It was similar to the Trust Territory period, \$10 million of income overall. Not

much really was going on. We got some hotels, but tourism had not really picked up yet. There was very little incentive for tourists to come here at that time.

Willens: Did you believe that the fact that the Commonwealth is part of the United States is one of the most important elements in attracting foreign investment to the Northern Marianas?

Tenorio: I think so. It's more of a myth on the part of outsiders to think this way, but it's really true. Investors psychologically feel more at ease on an island where the U.S. flag flies, where laws are subject to the U.S., where the overall political control is under the U.S., and where there is access to a U.S. court system. International people feel that it's fairer (than any other country for that matter) and that the threat of nationalizing their companies is not there because it's not an independent country. So there is that very strong perception that it's good to invest here. Plus of course the one thing that not too many people really are aware of, but one of the fundamental incentives by Japanese to come here to invest is because of the affinity—historical and emotional—attachment to the islands. Some of them feel remorse about what had been done by that previous administration of Japanese and they wanted to come back and kind of pay for it. Pay for their mistakes, their wrongdoings, and to develop the islands. The Japanese stayed here for 30 years. That means a lot to them. I think the Japanese government may not be publicly saying this to investors who wanted to come here, but it's probably discussed during the meetings that yes, we need to go and help out the people there. We feel obligated, a lot of Japanese have died over here, and a lot have been buried over here. They have another social interest and that is there were a lot of bones out here. And you know how Japanese are with death—a very strong emotional attachment to it—and they want to come and collect the bones. So those are all intertwined reasons, not just one. And of course they have the money. That is a major key.

Willens: One of the arguments you used to support the Covenant was that there would be economic benefits that would flow to the people here in the Northern Marianas. Do you think, looking back 15 years, that has proved to be the case?

Tenorio: Certainly. Certainly it has.

Willens: Do you have any reservations with respect to the pace or kind of economic development that is taking place here?

Tenorio: No, I think it's going well. It's going great. What has happened over at least the last 12 years, over the last 16 years, has been growth. There's been no growth for a while, but then it picked up and a lot of people are very well off either through their own initiative or through work in the government. Salaries, wages and benefits continue to rise and other opportunities come about in the private sector because of the investment climate brought about by mostly Japanese investors. There's a tremendous number of people also that got windfall wealth from land transactions and they stop to think. The private businesses naturally prosper because of the tremendous amount of construction activities being generated due to new investment. So I have no regrets about the policies implemented. And the financial assistance provided by the United States contributes to the success of the Commonwealth people in acquiring substantial economic well-being.

Willens: I remember that you played an active role in negotiating the second multi-year funding. In the course of those negotiations, did anyone on the United States side take the position that the Covenant did not require multi-year funding and that the Marianas should in the future depend on an annual budgetary appropriation?

- Tenorio: No, no. I don't remember anybody questioning it. I guess part of the reason why it was never questioned is because we had such a great relationship with the Congress, staffers and key members of Congress. We got along very well and also we got along very well with Interior.
- Willens: And who were the people at Interior that you dealt with?
- Tenorio: I dealt with Rick Montoya, Assistant Secretary. He was the president's personal representative for the [Section] 702 negotiations.
- Willens: You were satisfied with the good faith of the United States?
- Tenorio: Yes. They never questioned whether or not it's necessary because I guess they saw the progress that was made and the expenditure of the funds over last seven years. In fact, it was only three years into our first term that we had the opportunity to use the funds. At least during that period, when we got into office we demonstrated to the federal government that every single penny that was received was well spent for public benefits, public projects. I don't think that they ever questioned our expenditures—where did we spend the money for what purpose. Because we justified it all. And it's not just the Covenant funds; it's also what we called over-ceiling funding for other projects that were not funded under the Covenant.
- Willens: What were the most important projects that Congress funded over and above the Covenant funds?
- Tenorio: The power plant was one. Expansion of the power plant to 15 megawatts of power. Originally it was seven, so we doubled it. And the most important project that Congress funded entirely was the hospital.
- Willens: The hospital.
- Tenorio: Commonwealth Health Center. That was during our Administration, when we got the full funding of \$33 million from the U.S. Congress.
- Willens: Was that for one year or more?
- Tenorio: For several years of appropriation. But there was an agreement to authorize so much based on a plan for construction costs that was developed during our time. There was an initial engineering study done by the previous Administration on the hospital. In fact, several sites were looked at, but eventually when we got in we decided on one site. We decided on one engineer to do the project, architectural engineer, and we worked very closely with the U.S. Health and Human Services. Dr. Sheridan Weinstein was then the U.S. Public Health Service Administrator for Region 9 in San Francisco, which oversaw the health needs of the Commonwealth and other Pacific areas. We were able to work very closely with that office to obtain their support for Congressional approval of the total funding for \$33 million. That was a major, major accomplishment; the funding for the hospital was entirely, I won't say entirely, but most of it was funded by appropriations from the Congress.
- Willens: Based on your experience in office and since, do you feel that the Covenant has been understood by the U.S. government as defining a different political status than Guam and the Virgin Islands have?
- Tenorio: Unfortunately, I have to say no. There has been a tremendous amount of misunderstanding on the part of the federal officials. Not so much in the Congress until recently, but quite a bit on the Interior side.

- Willens: Is that in the most recent years?
- Tenorio: No, no, no. This is not in the most recent years. This is from the time that we started discussing issues and differences between the U.S. and our government on Covenant provisions. Self-government, for example, the authority of the Interior Department to oversee us just like any territory, and the practice of trying to establish a common territorial policy for every insular possession of the United States. All of this mentality, all of this thinking on the part of Interior officials had actually created negative feelings about where these people are coming from, whether they really understand the Covenant, or they just want to take the easy way out because the Covenant was such a unique document. There was never any single person there in the U.S. government that actually stayed on, maybe other than Herman Marcuse from the Justice Department, who can actually sit down with one of them and go over it and try to explain to the federal people just what the Covenant's all about.
- Willens: Are there any specific issues that you recall being the subject of controversy between the Commonwealth and the Interior Department?
- Tenorio: Yes, issues like the ability of the local legislature to enact laws.
- Willens: Laws on what subject matter?
- Tenorio: Laws for example on subjects like the exclusive economic zone and the applicability of the Magnuson Act. This actually was all discussed during the [Section] 902 process, but that was one area where we thought the federal government really had no control over us—simply because we had enacted legislation prior to the Commonwealth that establishes our right under that particular issue. Also, I guess the overall subject of self-government. Just to what extent does Interior have control over the CNMI. For example, can Interior unilaterally execute a policy that would affect local government. To what extent does Interior Department have the right to say, for example, Governor, I'm going to establish a resident representative there on Saipan. Does he have any right? Is that provided for in the Covenant, or is that understood as part of the American political system that any director, any secretary of any department, can just go in and establish a resident representative here to act on behalf of himself.
- Willens: You suggested that until recently relations with members of Congress and their staff were reasonably good. Has there been a change?
- Tenorio: Yes, yes, yes. There has been a change over the last three years. I remember going to Congress mostly for the budget, but sometimes for other hearings. I never had any problem at all with any of the staffers or members of Congress. The budget set forth [under] the Covenant is no problem; we negotiated a seven year agreement and we got the full support of Congress. On over-ceiling requests, and when justifying any budget over the last several years, I always got very favorable support from not only the staffers but also from the committees and their chairmen. In fact, I found myself sometimes sitting with Montoya before the Yates Committee, where Yates would say, "Governor, you and Mr. Montoya seem to have a problem". This was the request for authorization and appropriation for \$15 million for water development programs in the Commonwealth. We had asked the Interior Committee to authorize it and then it went to the Yates Committee for appropriation over a several years period. But Interior refused to support that. They said that we didn't really need that kind of money. But I told them that we do, and we justified that. In fact, it was through Jim Beirne's initiative that we managed to get the Senate to approve that authorization for a long-term appropriation for funds—\$15 million for water—rather than coming there for \$3 million every year. Jim asked me one

time on the telephone, “Hey Pete, why don’t you come up with a plan for expenditure and appropriation of the water. How much do you really need to get the water fixed?” I said, “\$15 million.” I developed the plan through some research and consulting in the office and I sent him a package for \$15. And I got it. He got Bennett Johnson and other Senate members to authorize that.

Willens: So what’s changed in the last few years?

Tenorio: The change? The change has been the attitude of the staffers. Somehow there has been a lack of communication. The staffers themselves feel they’re not being visited with and consulted by the government representative over here. They feel more separate from them than close together—unlike during our time. That was one reason. Secondly, I think there was also some new attitude in Congress, especially among the insular delegates, that maybe the CNMI was just getting too much. They seemed to feel that it’s making us look kind of bad—here we are members of Congress and we have to scratch the bottom of the barrel to get small measly appropriations through our own committee, but when the Marianas come over here with a \$15 million package, we give it to them or a \$32 million package that’s not a commitment in the Covenant but on over-ceiling requests justified on the basis of a presentation by us. So my own personal feeling is that there was a little bit of enviousness on the part of the delegates from the other insular areas which has accumulated over the years. Now it’s an opportunity for them to slow that down or to stop it so that more federal assistance can be distributed to their own respective territories. I think the opportunity arises because they were having a problem with our current Governor with regard to requests by some House committee members. For example, Miller wanted to include in the Omnibus Territories Act a provision requiring the Governor’s submission of a report to Congress regarding the recipients of tax rebates issued to them in accordance with the law. The Governor resisted that, and we had resisted that prior to that time, but we never got real flack from them. But now, it’s just a personality change. In the past I think Congress was very, very nice to Governor Tenorio. Now they seem to be a little bit alienated by Governor Guerrero.

Willens: Congressman Miller has focused on the alien labor situation and the alleged lack of effective enforcement by the Commonwealth of its laws and U.S. laws. Do you think there is merit in those criticisms of the Commonwealth?

Tenorio: There is some merit, but the basic problem is this, Howard. Miller seems to shoot from the hip. I compare him with Burton, who also shot from the hip, but with reason and good judgment. Miller seems to jump all over you because he’s just irritated. The guy gets irritated over something that he’s only half informed about. You know, his staffers will whisper to him and say, “Let’s get this son of a bitch.”, excuse me, then he’ll get them. You know he sent us some staffers over here, what’s his name, Jody Sunkin and some other guys from his staff in the Interior Committee, to investigate the factories here and to see what kind of violations they had on wage, salary and labor abuses. Virginia Sablan was here too. The three of them went and talked to people and visited in the factories. They went back with a very positive report—that there’s nothing really serious happening over there. There are some enforcement problems but, you know, it’s partly federal, partly us. One of the things that was never really emphasized was the fact that we’re just started with this industry. Ninety percent of the owners of factories here are foreigners, who are not even familiar with OSHA. Even those that are familiar with OSHA are still in violation. So they expect us to grow up so damn quickly and if we don’t, they’re going to fine us. There is a sense of tremendous intimidation, unnecessary Federal intimidation. People get scared and don’t know what to do. We ask them to come and correct us and they

say, “No, you correct yourself. We just come and fine you”. That’s the mentality that the federal government has regarding the CNMI. It’s treating us like the federal officials are a bunch of slave drivers, slave owners. And you know, the media in the U.S. is not helping us out. Not one single Congressman has come down to really investigate for himself, before opening up his mouth and criticizing. All these accusations about labor abuses and things like that are coming really from Miller out of frustration, out of misunderstanding, out of the fact that he wants to be a champion of the labor unions. So he thinks that people should be treated just as good as they are being treated in his own district. Yet he has never come out here to really assess whether we have a labor union problem here. Is it human abuse? Of course, we have people that complain to the Labor Department and to the Governor’s office about mistreatment. But where in the world does this not happen? It happens anywhere. But we have got a very negative Congressional attitude already, so the media picks it up. They only talk about bad things; they are not being fair. We were actually tried by the media, found guilty, and hung several times. There were some cases involving major wage and salary abuses by some garment factories. Like Willie Tan, for example, who was fined \$9 million dollars because of his violation. But then again the critics and media don’t understand the background to that. Nobody wants to understand it. The federal people don’t understand it.

Willens: Let’s take another issue like tax rebates and the general question whether people here in the Marianas are paying the same percentage of their income by way of taxes to support their own government as people in the continental United States. Do you think that the tax rebates have been too generous and that they ought to be reduced?

Tenorio: Personally I think it has been too generous, but there is simply one thing that needs to be said about the private investment side of the issue. It is an incentive; it’s an economic or investment incentive. It encourages private business investors to come in, okay. We charge them the four percent gross receipts tax.

Willens: Which percent?

Tenorio: Four percent business gross receipts tax. Nowhere in the U.S. do they charge that; they tax only net profits. That in itself is a burden because, before you even make a single penny of profit, they tax you. I don’t know whether the federal officials or the Congress really understands that if we tax them on net profits, we are probably not going to get too much tax out of it. In order for them to have the incentive to invest here, we use the tax rebate as a sort of buffer on losses experienced by businesses, especially in the early years where everything is investment capital and operations costs, and the owners don’t get anything back. If they spent \$10 million a year, and they take back \$10 million a year in gross receipts, they are charged 4% of the \$10 million. That’s \$400,000. So they end up losing \$400,000. The tax rebate will tend to offset that, okay. There is that buffer portion. The critics just don’t understand this thing. I don’t think they really care, or give a damn. All they think about is that we are giving them a very good tax break. I mean, is there any county or any city in the U.S. that charges a business gross receipts tax? There is none, I think. That is why I said it is an incentive; otherwise, what is the point of coming to invest in the CNMI? Where is the other incentive? Of course, cheap labor, \$2.15 per hour. But then is it really that cheap? It’s not. When you think about the overall costs of transportation, insurance, food and lodging, medical, and what not. You end up with something like \$4.00 per hour or \$3.89 to be exact. That’s the amount of money that each employer who hires alien workers has to put up. Those are his responsibilities to that particular alien worker for the duration of the contact. Something goes wrong and they die, you have to send them back in a casket paid for the employer. In the United States

when you hire a daytime employee, they have their own house, their own transportation, you don't care where they go, you don't worry about them. Here it is a different setup, it's a different environment on hiring. Congress doesn't understand this thing, they don't understand it. If they do, they just don't give a hoot about it because it's not ammunition for them to attack us. I feel that Congress is just deliberately taking some of these positions because they want to retaliate against Governor Guerrero because he refused to cooperate with Miller in submitting the so-called list of tax rebate recipients. It had to be subpoenaed practically.

Willens: Do you think the situation would be improved if the Commonwealth had a non-voting delegate in Congress?

Tenorio: I don't think it would improve.

Willens: Do you support that idea?

Tenorio: I am kind of uncertain that on this one. I am not so sure whether or not I do. My only reservation then, Howard, maybe I am wrong on this thing but, my only reservation is that if we have a delegate to Congress, in my own feeling and as I said I may be wrong, it's going to dilute our political status to the level of Guam and the Virgin Islands. We have a Covenant that we think, and I think realistically, it's much superior to the territories, okay. We have the self-government clause, we've got a Constitution, we got powers, certain exemptions to federal laws and several provisions of the U.S. Constitution, whereas Guam and the Virgin Islands do not. Now, a delegate to Congress is supposed to put the insular areas and the Commonwealth on an equal footing so far as representation. What about the political status level? Would that be subsequently diluted too or be on the same level, so that when the federal government says, "Okay, you are just like Guam." You got to litigate. Never mind the Covenant. All of the rights that we gave you and all the privileges—we're going to have to take them back so that Guam, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa can then be the same as the Commonwealth. This is the so-called common Territorial policy. I am afraid of that. I am not articulating my concern about this publicly because it sounds ridiculous. Why become a part of the U.S. and when the time comes to get equal representation you say no? I have my own opinion, but our political status achievement and the political status that we have now under the Covenant is much superior to Guam's Organic Act. For example, why should we run the risk of diluting our status if it's going to be in danger of being diluted by having a delegate similar to Guam. It's kind of a crazy mixed-up way of looking at things.

Willens: I'm really glad you addressed this issue. I had heard this sentiment before, but not from anyone who comes at it with your background. In concluding of this interview, what do you see as the challenges for the Commonwealth over the next ten to fifteen years?

Tenorio: Challenges? A lot of them. The federal relations problems, I think, will have to be resolved. The unfortunate part about it is that maybe it's never going to be resolved unless the federal government really becomes more flexible, more considerate and more understanding with respect to problems being raised now. The challenge is that, if we could resolve the [Section] 902 issues; that would pacify a lot of people. That would make the Commonwealth relationship much more meaningful and much more promising (I think) over the years. But the problem is that if those [Section] 902 issues are resolved in favor of the CNMI, it will not be in the interests of the federal government. Because there were issues that affect us, but nevertheless if they're resolved we would benefit if current positions of the Commonwealth were honored.

- Willens: Yes, but from the United States standpoint, many of the positions taken by the Commonwealth during the 902 negotiations were contrary to the Covenant.
- Tenorio: Well, that's what they say, but then, we don't know, see? That's the purpose of consultation—to try and come up with agreements, maybe a compromise, on these things. Other issues that I think would definitely be a challenge is for the CNMI to continue to retain the ability to control its own immigration here. I'm afraid that unless the U.S. makes some kind of exception to its law to protect us here from the impact of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Act, we would be overwhelmed by immigrants as fast as any area in the United States.
- Willens: People would come here and establish residence.
- Tenorio: People would come here, establish residence, and be able to vote immediately after three years of being a resident and obtaining U.S. citizenship. Just like in Guam. Guam is right now almost 50 percent former immigrants. A lot of the Guamanians are gone.
- Willens: A lot of the Guamanians are gone?
- Tenorio: Yes.
- Willens: Immigrants from where?
- Tenorio: From the Philippines, from Korea, and other places—these are resident aliens that are in Guam and over the years they would begin to vote. Remember one of the most important reasons why we wanted to control immigration was to prevent immigrant aliens from coming into the CNMI and using this place as U.S. territory for purposes of acquiring permanent residential status and eventually U.S. citizenship. If the U.S. takes over immigration, it is going to have to apply its immigration policy as is, unless like I said, there is a change to exempt us from the resident alien encroachment, or intrusion into using this island as an entry point to the U.S. Then we have no choice. But who really is going to care? Would the U.S. Congress be conscious of that? Would they know, really? And that's my biggest reservation. Because everybody is saying, "Well, we've got so many aliens over here that, you know, in twenty years we're going to be overwhelmed by aliens and we're not going to rule ourselves. It's not going to be our island anymore." I say, "Heck, forget about twenty years. Four years from now. You apply the U.S. immigration laws for a four years, five years period, politically speaking we'll all be dead because people like these islands." Filipinos are going to come in the thousands; Koreans are going to come in by the thousands; that Taiwanese also, whoever can be recognized to be immigrants to the U.S. They will come over here. People from Guam will come over here. Then you get other problems like the Article 12 issue, for example. After 25 years, that thing's going to be probably thrown out of court, maybe. We don't know. There is momentum now to change that provision. We know that 25 years is the limit for the land alienation clause. After that period, that's another consideration that might factor into the immigration of overwhelming numbers of people coming to reside here. We would eventually lose control. These are challenges that we have to prevent from happening, and yet economic development here cannot continue unless we've got alien workers. I'm convinced of that already. Now to the extent that we want to develop, we need alien workers. I don't know to what point is, but we should probably consider a saturation point of some kind.
- Willens: There has been a recession in recent months with a decline in the number of alien laborers, I'm told. Is that correct?
- Tenorio: Not, not really. It's a temporary event, but they've been recycled. It's just that some companies just don't need them, so they go to another company that has jobs. But, more

hotels, more developments are coming, more businesses, more commercial developments are coming to the islands. The U.S. would control this because they are afraid that we might be overwhelmed by aliens. Then they [the federal officials] are going to be controlling our economic destiny. You know, the whole idea for trying to develop and using alien workers to help our economic growth was to be able to go back to the U.S. and say, "Uncle Sam, we don't need your money any more. We've got enough. We don't want any more handouts." But the U.S. is going to prevent that from happening.

Willens: Do you think that day will happen?

Tenorio: Oh, of course.

Willens: You will have economic self-sufficiency?

Tenorio: Right now, Howard, we don't need the \$17 million. We don't really need it. That money is for CIP. That's \$17 million a year for the next seven years. We don't really need that. We can't even afford that, based on the current 702 agreements where we have to match it dollar for dollar. But if we lose industries, their investment over here, and we lose the revenue from them through the elimination of alien workers or control of alien workers, then we're losing direct revenue that goes into the government's coffer for operations, meaning people, employing people. The garment industry is a good example.

Willens: What's a good example?

Tenorio: Garment. It's not textile, its garment. Garment production. Finished product. Direct income from that industry to the government is about \$13 million. Indirect income through associated businesses, transportation, other retails and what not, is \$17 million. You are talking about \$30 million of actual revenue coming to the government from that one industry alone. That's \$30 million out of \$160 million projected funding every year. So it's, almost one-sixth, OK? It was one-sixth, about fifteen percent, sixteen percent. Sixteen percent of that would be lost if the federal government says no more aliens. Or if you control it to the point where these industries cannot survive economically, they are not profitable, they will just pull out and go. If we lose the \$17 million, OK, we lose it, CIP may have to slow down some of their pipe work, sewer lines, water lines and what not. But if you lose the \$30 million, you are talking about people that are directly depending upon that income in order to finance their survival.

Willens: How about the complaints about the size and inefficiency of the Commonwealth government?

Tenorio: Of course, everybody knows that. In the United States they are trying to reorganize the government now because it is so inefficient and so costly, so what's new? I mean, this is politics. You got to face reality, you know. If you are elected to office, you're bound to do favors for people. That's part of life. That's the explanation for it. I can't make any excuses about it. That's the way it is. That's the way it has been since the Trust Territory time, since time immemorial. That's what's happening in Guam, American Samoa, the Virgin Islands. They are all the same; there's no difference. We're not going to hide anything on that. I mean, sure, the government is large, but that's how people operate over here. Is Mr. Miller going to tell us to keep our electorate from getting hired? I mean, does he have any decency not to respect that? Of course not.

Willens: On that note, thank you very much for your time, and I hope you have been able to say everything essentially that you wanted to say. It has been very helpful to me.

- Tenorio: Well, I guess I have. It's quite interesting that you are taking me back over twenty years and that I recall a lot of things, but so much happened. Really, so much happened over the last twenty years.
- Willens: It's been twenty years.
- Tenorio: Since 1972, it's been twenty years, yes. And, you know, it's interesting too that I still can recall some. Of course, there's a lot of things I didn't recall. One thing that I'd like to say in closing is that you have been such a great help to us, on court and off court, meaning on court when you were here advising us in the negotiations and writing position papers explaining to the Commission what this provision means and what are the consequences. Those were very, very impressive, you know, things that I remembered you being the counsel for the Political Status Commission. And off court, of course, when we go to Washington, you continued to advise us there and give us guidelines on how to approach things, help us before speeches in the hearings, and try to provide answers to a lot of legal questions that people in Congress and the agencies of the government ask for. You know, yours is such an unusual firm—in that you took this job with a passion, a lot of passion that builds up and somehow it filtered into a lot of us, at least to me. I have very deep respect for that, you know, that effort you made. You've been very professional, and, you know, that's educational for me too, because in the beginning, of course, Eddie just selected somebody he knew. You know how things are, everybody's got a little inhibition there, because there's some difference between me and Ed and the Popular Party and all of this thing. But then, being reasonable myself and being very objective, over the course of the negotiation and the course of knowing you and your associates, I just want to commend you for the things that you folks have really done. I think even to the extent of you not making the kind of money that you would otherwise make for other clients, but nevertheless you spent your time, you provided real genuine support to help us through the entire process. Being here again after twenty years just demonstrates how much personal interest you have in our community. You just don't forget us.
- Willens: Well, that's very nice of you. It's been one of my greatest and most satisfying professional experiences.