

## INTERVIEW OF PEDRO P. TENORIO

By Howard P. Willens

April 11, 1995

- Willens: Pedro P. Tenorio served as Governor for eight years in the Commonwealth, having been elected first in 1981 and reelected in 1985 for two four year terms. Governor, thank you very much for being available for this interview. I know that you understand our project and we appreciate your cooperation. Could you begin by giving me some family background—when you were born and who your parents were?
- Tenorio: Yes, I was born on April 18, 1934. My father, who is deceased, was Blas Pangelinan Tenorio.
- Willens: What's his first name?
- Tenorio: Blas Pangelinan Tenorio. My mother is Guadalupe Sablan Pangelinan. We were eight sisters and brothers. And, of course, I am married to my wonderful wife, Sophia Pangelinan Tenorio, and we have eight children—four boys and four girls. Presently I'm residing in the As Lito area.
- Willens: Could you help me understand the various lines of the Tenorio family in the Northern Marianas? I understand that you are first cousin to your Lieutenant Governor, Pete A. Tenorio, is that correct?
- Tenorio: Yes, Pete A. Tenorio is my first cousin. His father is my father's brother. Right after the war, my father was pretty much involved in politics as a councilman and as a district commissioner. I don't know why I ended up with politics too, since I was not too keen on politics at the time. I was more concerned with private sector business ventures. But the Tenorio family kind of entered the community political and business sectors right after the Second World War. Before that I think most of the families were either farmers, government employees, or engaged in their own small business ventures.
- Willens: Were you educated under the Japanese Administration?
- Tenorio: Yes, I was educated during the Japanese time. I was ten years old at the time and I went to Japanese school. But, as a result of the war, by 1943 we would just go to school for about an hour or so. Then for the rest of the day we go over the airfield to pick up some of the rocks and to help build up the runway for the Japanese pilots.
- Willens: Was it required that you and other students engage in that work?
- Tenorio: Yes, more or less, we were required. Like I say, we had to report to school and we were inside the classroom for about an hour or so, and the rest of the time we would just march through the airfield area and help with the work over there.
- Willens: Do you have any recollection of the invasion itself? Where were you and your family at the time?
- Tenorio: Yes, I remember one of our customs was that every weekend you would have to visit your grandparents. So it happened that I was with my mother and one of my sisters at my grandfather's house in Tanapag. My father and another sister were in the Dandan area, and two of my sisters were also at Finasisu at my grandfather's and grandmother's house on my father's side. It was a terrible time. The air raid—I believe it was Sunday, I'm not sure of the date, but it was June 11, if I'm not mistaken, it was Sunday—so we were stuck

with that. During the bombardment we had to move from one place to the other until we finally met up with my father and with my other brother. My two sisters had already been secured at the concentration camp right after the invasion on the 15th. We would have been captured or saved by the U.S. right on July 4th of 1944.

Willens: Where was your family residence at the time?

Tenorio: At the time our residence was in the Dandan area.

Willens: Did you have a farm house as well?

Tenorio: Well, we had a small home. I believe that in the latter part of 1943 we were removed from our house in the Gualo Rai area. We used to have our own house. Unfortunately, the Japanese had to move us so they could use that for other purposes because of the anticipated war between the U.S. and the Japanese. So we were forced to go out from our house and my father had to build a small shack to start with. Eventually we kind of extended it so we could at least live in one residence. So the majority of our people, more or less, moved from the city to the farm area at that time.

Willens: At the time of the invasion your brothers and sisters were all spread out at various family homes. Did you eventually all reunite in the internment camp?

Tenorio: Yes, eventually all the Chamorros were in one area. The Chamorros and the Carolinians were put in one particular area and, of course, the Japanese and the Okinawans were put in a separate camp. But I believe the camps in those days were more or less for the protection of the people. You know, the war was not over until later. So the concentration camp was done more or less, I believe, for the protection of our people who had been captured by the U.S.

Willens: Did you continue your education then under the Naval Administration?

Tenorio: Yes, I went to school some time right after the war. We were fortunate to have one of the military teachers who was able to teach us. We had the old Japanese school in Chalan Kanoa, which was renovated, and we used that as a classroom. And at the same time we studied under one of our local trees—the “kamachili” tree.

Willens: What is that?

Tenorio: Its a big tree, you know, with a big shade underneath. So we would go under the shade and study under the tree. That’s how we started. You could not start from grade one or two, they just kind of put everyone together (like on an age basis) and try to go from there.

Willens: Did you go to high school on the island here or did you go away for high school?

Tenorio: Well, I left in 1950. My father encouraged me to go Guam and pursue my education. So I left for Guam in 1950, October I believe. I attended the elementary school in Guam. Then I attended the George Washington High School and graduated from there in 1955. At that time the first Territory College of Guam was just been established and, you know, I tried to go on to school there. Unfortunately, I just went there for one subject, I believe. But I kind of felt that I had reached the peak and that I had to earn some money for my living too.

Willens: Did you return to Saipan then in about 1955 or 1956?

Tenorio: No, I worked in Guam for about a year or so in two different companies. Then I returned to Saipan and worked for the Saipan Shipping Company as a bursar in 1956, traveling between Saipan, Tinian, Rota and Guam, back and forth on a weekly basis. Then eventually I was transferred to work at the office as an accounting clerk in 1956 or 1957.

- Willens: How long did you stay with Saipan Shipping?
- Tenorio: At that time I didn't stay too long. I stayed for a very short period. Then I worked for the Naval Administration for a short time. Then I transferred and worked for the Naval Technical Training Unit for a short time. I was then asked to teach at the Hopwood Intermediate School because of the shortage of teachers. So I taught there for about a year. Then I went back to the Saipan Shipping Company and I stayed there for almost eleven years. I was the General Manager at the time I left the company.
- Willens: Was Saipan Shipping one of the major commercial companies on the island of Saipan at the time?
- Tenorio: Yes, Saipan Shipping Company was as a matter of fact one of the biggest local ventures at that time—traveling weekly between Saipan, Tinian, Rota and Guam, and bringing in cargo for the local merchants here.
- Willens: As I understand, the Saipan Shipping Company was formed by Jose Tenorio, better known as Joeten. Is that correct?
- Tenorio: Yes, the company was formed by J.C. Tenorio (Joeten) with other individuals like Vicente S. Camacho and Francisco R. Cruz, and there were others who operated small mom-pop retail stores who were also stockholders of the company. Eventually it was sold to local Chamorro people or Carolinians who were interested in buying the stock. I should say that Saipan Shipping Company was one of the most successful companies here in the CNMI at that period of time.
- Willens: Did you have a family relationship with Joeten?
- Tenorio: Yes. Joeten was my second cousin. I found Joeten to be a unique individual. His philosophy was that, if you are working for a company, you have to help the company. There's no family ties or anything. You have to produce. As a matter of fact, the reason why I left Saipan Shipping is, not that I was forced to get out of the company, but that Joeten encouraged me to join politics so that I could have more opportunity to help the community. He said, you know, the company's good and I could stay as long as I wanted, but it's good also to join politics so that you have a more open hand to help the local community.
- Willens: How would you describe Joeten's relationship with the Carolinian community on Saipan?
- Tenorio: Well, like I said, Joeten was kind of a unique individual. I would say that the local community, the Carolinians also, at the time were just part of the indigenous people on the island. Except, of course, they identified themselves as Carolinian and Chamorro, but other than that almost everybody had the same opportunity to improve himself, or to go to school, or to do whatever they felt like doing. So they all got the opportunity. As a matter of fact Joeten employed Chamorros and Carolinians as well.
- Willens: When you first become engaged in politics did you affiliate with the Territorial Party where Joeten was so active?
- Tenorio: I have been in the Territorial Party from the beginning. I never left the Party. Yes, Joeten was also a member of the Territorial Party. Of course, here in Saipan parties serve just kind of an identification purpose. At one time I was running for an office. I was in the Territorial Party. My parents were in the Popular Party. So, you know, it's just a matter of identifying the party where you are running.

Willens: But I gather that, unlike many of your colleagues, you have not changed parties then over the years.

Tenorio: No, I never changed parties. I stuck with my party and, unfortunately, I lost a few elections during the early years because I was not in the majority party, which was the Popular Party. I was asked by many of my friends and relatives to join that party so I could be elected easily. But, you know, I believe in my principles. So I stuck with my party and believed that times would come, perhaps, when people would change and vote for me.

Willens: While you were engaged at the Saipan Shipping Company in the 1960s, were you active in the Territorial Party's program to secure a future political status with the United States?

Tenorio: Well, I was a little active with that. I always kind of gave my thoughts to some of the people involved in politics. At that time also the issue of integration with Guam came up. My parents were for the integration with Guam because we had family in Guam. Although I was educated in Guam, had a lot of friends over there, and considered Guam as my second home at that time, I believed that it would be difficult for Guam as a territory of the United States to integrate with the CNMI (or the Marianas at that time) because it would need the approval of the U.S. So at that time we were more or less asking the U.S. to give us an opportunity to negotiate directly with the United States so that the U.S. would eventually, if possible, approve either the integration with Guam or some separate [status] condition.

Willens: Some of the people who opposed reintegration with Guam were concerned that the Marianas businesses and people would suffer because the Guamanians were more advanced at the time and also would have a majority of the voters. Did those concerns affect your judgment?

Tenorio: No, some of those concerns were issues, but they never affected my judgment. I firmly believed each individual can do good if he really works hard. And, like I say, I had the experience of living in Guam for almost six years, so I had no problem in coming over and establishing myself to do business here on the island. As far as the politics was concerned, maybe yes, if there is integration with Guam, maybe being a more populated area the Guamanians could control, but I doubt it. Of course, I'd like to say that some of that may have had some affect. But I think our local people had a little different view—thinking that Guam was very much more economically . . .

Willens: Advanced?

Tenorio: Advanced, yes, they're more economically advanced. That the job opportunities would be available to our local people in the event that we integrated with Guam. Because in those days it was very, very difficult. I was fortunate when going to school because I was there during 1952 when the Guamanians became U.S. citizens. So I was able to get a green card at the time and I was able to work in Guam. But after that, those students who wanted to go to Guam for school had to get a I-20 [visa] and also they could not get a job unless [U.S.] Immigration approved their request. So, I think that's one of the other reasons why lots of our people wanted to integrate with Guam, so that they would have an opportunity to move to Guam and improve their standard of living.

Willens: Some of the Territorial Party leaders during the 1960s and the early 1970s also emphasized the desirability of the Northern Marianas staying together with the rest of Micronesia to create a common political future together. Did you have any views during the 1960s and early 1970s as to the desirability of Micronesia staying together as a political entity?

- Tenorio: Yes, some of our local people would like to see that and some of them thought that it might be possible. But after a few years—after the Congress of Micronesia was established—I think our people began to feel that it's going to be very difficult to make one nation of all Micronesia because of the different customs, different needs, and different types of things that they wanted to do on the islands. At that time our people began to feel it's not going to work. That's one of the reasons why the majority of our people preferred to negotiate directly with the U.S.—to have a separate entity from the rest of Micronesia. But, like I say, some of them would have liked to see it happen. Unfortunately, we know it's not going to happen. I think history is very clear because, even among the Micronesians themselves we have three other entities, Palau, the Marshalls, and the FSM, and of course the CNMI. So I think it's worked out the way the other Micronesian peoples liked, to have their own governments established.
- Willens: I learned recently that there was resentment here in the Northern Marianas when the Congress of Micronesia was formed in 1964. Do you have any recollection of when you first heard about the creation of the Congress of Micronesia and what your attitude was at the time?
- Tenorio: Well, as a matter of fact, I was happy with the creation of the Congress of Micronesia because at least we should have some representation in and from the Congress. Maybe our voice is not that strong, but at least we could make a little noise to the Trust Territory government—telling them what we need and, you know, expressing our desire as to what we wanted to do. So I was not one of those who resented having the Congress of Micronesia. I was very pleased with its creation, like I said, because I knew that at least we could have a voice during the session.
- Willens: The opposition I've heard about was attributed to the Popular Party leadership. I have heard that Mr. Nabors came down from the Attorney General's office to speak to the local leadership. Is it your recollection today that the Popular Party leadership may have been opposed to the Congress of Micronesia but that the Territorial Party leadership felt that on the whole it was beneficial to have a new legislative body like this?
- Tenorio: Well, the Territorial Party at that time was also a little business-minded. I think the creation of the Congress of Micronesia and the transfer of the headquarters to Saipan would create job opportunities and would improve the standard of living of our people. I think maybe some of the Popular Party at the time were concerned that the Micronesians would control the Congress because of their greater population. I was a member of the Congress of Micronesia and, of course, I had to lobby and talk to my friends, you know, if I wanted to pass a bill, and try to convince them. But it's true that because of the population differences, the Marianas had very little influence in trying to pass some bill that would benefit the CNMI only and not the other districts. Perhaps that's one of the reasons for the resentment by the opposition party at the time.
- Willens: I know that you were elected to the Congress of Micronesia in November of 1972 along with Mr. Atalig and Herman Q. Guerrero. Had you run for any political office before 1972?
- Tenorio: I had run for the Municipal Council and the District Legislature. Like I say, every time I ran for the lower office I lost the election, but when I ran for the highest office I was lucky and won the election.
- Willens: Do you remember when you first ran for the Municipal Council and the District Legislature?

- Tenorio: No, I have never been a member of the Municipal Council or the District Legislature until I became a member of the District Legislature in 1976, during the transition period from Trust Territory to the Commonwealth. So I was a member of the 5th Legislature of the Trust Territory. Then, of course, in the election in 1977 . . .
- Willens: You were elected to the Senate?
- Tenorio: . . . I was elected to the Senate.
- Willens: But I was just trying to clarify when you first ran for office. I know you were defeated in your first efforts. Do you remember when you first became active in a campaign?
- Tenorio: My first in politics was when I won the Congress of Micronesia in 1972. That was my first . . .
- Willens: That was your first success?
- Tenorio: . . . success in the politics, yes.
- Willens: But you'd had some disappointments before?
- Tenorio: I had a few disappointments before that one.
- Willens: Did that go back to when the District Legislature was created in 1963. Did you run early on?
- Tenorio: I ran twice and I lost the elections.
- Willens: You ran twice for the Council, too?
- Tenorio: No, I think I ran once for the Council and once for the Legislature.
- Willens: Did you run for the Council before you ran for the Legislature?
- Tenorio: The Council first, then the Legislature. And I came in two votes short, you know what I mean.
- Willens: You missed by two votes?
- Tenorio: Yes, by two votes.
- Willens: Oh, you came very close.
- Tenorio: I came very close, but not enough to be the member.
- Willens: It certainly seems to be the case based on the records that the Popular Party had the overwhelming majority in both the Municipal Council and the District Legislature during the 1960s.
- Tenorio: Well, during the 1960s, I believe, about 80 percent of the eligible voters were Popular Party.
- Willens: Do you attribute that dominance to the Popular Party's position on political status or were there other issues as well that explain the difference between the parties?
- Tenorio: I attribute that to the people's feeling in part that because Joeten was a very successful businessman, Joeten as a leader in the Territorial Party might have all the influence. The Popular Party claimed that they were the people's party. They would appeal to those who are barely making their living. That's the kind of feeling of the people at the time. There are times when the local people felt that those people who were successful were doing more for their own benefit rather than to help the poor people. I think it was a very bad misconception because I believe it was the other way around. Those people who were

fortunate to have businesses and were doing well at the time were the ones who tried to help the local people find a job and do something, you know, to improve themselves.

Willens: In 1970 the United States made a proposal to the Micronesian status negotiators that was called a Commonwealth Proposal. This was a few years before you were in the Congress of Micronesia. The Micronesian negotiators rejected this out of hand, but some of the Marianas political leaders like Congressman Manglona, Senator Borja, and others, said that the U.S. Commonwealth Proposal might be a good place to begin negotiations with the United States. Do you have any recollection as to how you personally and your colleagues responded to the Commonwealth Proposal?

Tenorio: If I'm not mistaken, the reason why that Commonwealth Proposal came about was because at the time the U.S. did not want to see the Marianas separate from the other districts. So the local people would like to see that.

Willens: Governor, do you have any recollection as to this Commonwealth Proposal and how it was responded to by the Congress of Micronesia, which had previously received a report recommending something called "free association?"

Tenorio: Yes, I think at the time the Congress of Micronesia rejected the Commonwealth Proposal by the United States. There was another study indicating that maybe free association would be the best for the Micronesians at that period. To be quite honest, I was not very much involved in politics at the time. But I felt at the time that I would like to see the CNMI achieve either commonwealth or free association for at least 25 to 50 years. Then we should let the next generation make the decision what to do after 50 years. We were doing this for our children and for the people of the CNMI. We were not sure what would happen to us in the event that we became a commonwealth or a freely associated state. But I would like to be part of the United States on a free association basis for a period of 50 years and after 50 years maybe have another negotiation and let the next generation decide their political status. We wanted to give the option to the next generation to make its own choice. But at that time I was very happy to be part of the United States. During my whole government career, I always have said that we are fortunate to be part of the United States and we are lucky that the U.S. approved our Covenant, which is a good document.

Willens: Did you have any feeling at the time in 1970 or 1972 that the people in the Northern Marianas were not yet ready for self-government? There is some debate in the records as to whether the people here were ready for the kind of self-government that was called for under a commonwealth relationship or under a free association relationship. What was your sense at the time?

Tenorio: Well, my sense at the time was I think that our people feel that we are ready. Like I said, we were very fortunate that right after the invasion the U.S. Congress created the Municipal Council and the Council, more or less, guided the local community with, of course, the help of the Naval Administration at the time. But we felt that, after many years of being independent from other countries, we were ready. So there was never a time when I felt that the local people were not ready. Although our elderly people were not educated by the U.S., they had their experience in guiding the Chamorros and the Carolinians even during the Japanese time and right after the war. So we have this custom that we look to our leadership and we have those people who are considered the leaders and we respect them—like Elias Sablan, the Benaventes, the Guerreros, and the Camachos. Of course, we feel that these people are ready to assist us, so I have no doubt that I thought we were ready.

- Willens: Do you think that some of the older leaders were as enthusiastic about the relationship with the United States as some of the younger leaders?
- Tenorio: Well, I think the older people were more interested about the United States because, like in my case, my parents were very enthusiastic and encouraged me to go to school and they liked to see me improve myself. Even my younger brother, they encouraged him to go to school. He went to Guam and attended the College of Guam. He got his own degree. My sisters also attended the big school in Truk. So my family was very much adapted to the U.S. type of living that, you know, we cannot just stay home and work at home, you have to go and learn and work so you could make your own living. So, I think they were the ones who really tried to encourage us to see that we should become part of the United States.
- Willens: Did you think that that attitude toward education and desire to become part of the United States was stronger here in Saipan than it was in the other districts where there were more traditions of a cultural and tribal nature?
- Tenorio: Yes, because Saipan, for example, was under Spanish, under German, under Japanese, then of course under the U.S. We kind of adopted a little bit of the Spanish customs; we learned a lot of it. Our parents, like my father, were born during the German Administration. He went to German school. We adopted some of the German culture, too. Then later the Japanese came along. We then adopted the Japanese way of living and learning. Then, of course, the U.S. We felt that after living under so many different nations, it was about time that we stick with one. The United States was the nation that we associated with peace and security as we looked around the world, so we felt that maybe by becoming part of it, there will be peace around the world.
- Willens: Did you ever have the occasion in the late 1960s and early 1970s to discuss political status issues with Dr. Palacios?
- Tenorio: I did. I had a chance to meet with Dr. Palacios. I found him to be a very intelligent individual and a very respectable gentleman too. He was reading all kinds of books—different books about different countries. He was doing his own work. Of course, you know, there were areas where we had different views, but I think he really tried to compare all the different nations by studying their different customs and governments.
- Willens: He seemed in the late 1960s to be a supporter of a free association relationship with all of Micronesia staying together. I gather from what you say that you disagreed with him at the time?
- Tenorio: No, not that I disagree with him. Like I say, I was one of the proponents of free association, under a separate relationship for the Marianas at the time. When I say free association, I mean that we associate with the United States for a period of 50 years. But, like I say, it was not too much because, if you look at the history back then among the Micronesians, they would rather be separate from other Micronesians. So we felt that, if the other Micronesians don't want to be joined together, it's only fair for us to be separate under the different concept of free association. But at the time, of course, commonwealth is just a name they kind of put out, but we didn't even know what commonwealth really meant. When we say free association we meant that we wanted to be part of the United States for an extended time. As I said, I was kind of interested at the time to see what would happen with free association for 50 years with the United States assisting and helping. We wanted to be part of the United States. After 50 years maybe, another referendum would give an opportunity for the next generation to make the decision. But again, I never regretted

- being in the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas. In fact, I'm very happy that it's happened.
- Willens: In 1972, April of that year, the United States agreed to separate political status negotiations and subsequently the District Legislature created the Marianas Political Status Commission. What was your reaction at the time to this decision?
- Tenorio: Well, I was happy. I was very pleased at the time because prior to that I think the United States was very much against splitting the Micronesians and said that they could unilaterally terminate the Trusteeship. So, when this happened, that they agreed to negotiate separately, I think that opened the door for our people to be more involved on the political issues.
- Willens: What do you think persuaded the United States after so many years to agree to separate negotiations?
- Tenorio: I am not sure. Really, I'm not sure; I hate to make a second guess on that.
- Willens: Did you have any discussions with leaders of the Popular Party like Ben Santos or Felipe Salas or Herman Q. Guerrero as to how this happened?
- Tenorio: No, we never had any discussions.
- Willens: When you ran for the Congress of Micronesia later in 1972, it appears as though you replaced Carl Shoda. Did he run for re-election or did you run against somebody else?
- Tenorio: No, Carlos ran for re-election at that time.
- Willens: What were the issues in that election that you think permitted you to carry the day?
- Tenorio: I had been encouraged by the Popular Party to run on the Popular Party ticket because I was assured that it would be the winning ticket. But, like I say, I have my own principles. I didn't want to win because of the Popular Party, I wanted to win on my own. If people want me to help them, I want to win on my own. I think a lot of Democrats started thinking that the party system was not that good. They were beginning to select people so some people would cross-vote at the time. Instead of voting Popular, they would vote Territorial if they felt that the individual would try his best to help the community.
- Willens: I believe it was in that same election that your cousin Pete A. Tenorio ran as an independent. Is that correct?
- Tenorio: Yes, at that time Pete ran for the—I forgot the name of that party. I forget the name of the party at the time. And he won the election also.
- Willens: I'm not sure he won in 1972.
- Tenorio: No, he lost.
- Willens: He won in 1974.
- Tenorio: He lost in that election to Eddie Pangelinan. Eddie's a close relative of my wife, too.
- Willens: What is the relationship between your wife and Ed Pangelinan?
- Tenorio: Ed Pangelinan and my wife are first cousins. Ed's mother and my wife's mother are sisters.
- Willens: But your mother was also a Pangelinan?
- Tenorio: Yes, my mother is also a Pangelinan.

- Willens: So there seems to be a long linkage between the Tenorios and the Pangelinans. During the Congress of Micronesia period of two years that you served, there were just two or three issues that I would like to raise with you and get your best recollection. In early 1973 a resolution was introduced in the Senate to oppose the separate Marianas negotiations. What is your recollection of the debate on that issue in the Congress?
- Tenorio: Well, I was not a member of the Political Status Committee at the time. But I was very disappointed because our leadership in the Congress and our local community would like to see that we have separate negotiations with the United States. So I felt kind of disappointed at the time. At least, give us the opportunity to meet with the U.S. and discuss and see if it's going to work or not. So a lot of our people were very unhappy at the time.
- Willens: Senator Pangelinan spoke up strongly against it, of course, in the Senate. Were you generally in agreement with the views of the other Marianas representatives in the Congress of Micronesia?
- Tenorio: Yes, I generally agreed because a majority of our people would like to see that happen. So I have no choice but to support the wishes of the majority of our people.
- Willens: While you were in the Congress of Micronesia for two years, the Marianas Political Status Commission had several rounds of negotiations with the United States that led to the Covenant being signed in February of 1975. First of all, did you try generally to keep in touch with what the Marianas Political Status Commission was discussing with the United States or was this something that was remote from your concern at the time?
- Tenorio: No, I was very much interested, but to be quite honest, at the time there were many times when it was not possible to disseminate information to the public. So we got very little information. Of course, I tried to follow through the press releases that were put out, but there were not many public hearings on the issues that were being discussed. I'm not saying that they didn't do a good job. The negotiators did a hell of a good job. I commend them for their good job, you know, they really did a good job.
- Willens: Well, you did have Dr. Palacios on the Commission from the beginning to the end. Felix Rabauliman representing the Carolinian community was on. And then Joeten was on only briefly and then replaced by . . .
- Tenorio: Pete A.
- Willens: . . . Pete A. Tenorio. There were representatives of the business community, the Territorial Party, and the Carolinian community and I'm identifying them because they were part of the Territorial Party. It is true, however, that the majority of the Commission were Popular Party leaders. Did you as a member of the Territorial Party leadership get a chance to meet from time to time with Dr. Palacios, Joeten, Pete A. Tenorio to find out what was going on?
- Tenorio: No. Like I say, I wanted to try to learn some of the things that were being discussed but, unfortunately, the only thing that I learned was from the press releases or from the papers that came out. There was very little kind of committee meeting among the party members or among the selected group of people.
- Willens: Well, one issue that did hit the front page of the *Pacific Daily News* in May of 1973 was that the United States wanted to take over the entire island of Tinian and then lease back one-third to the civilian community. The United States subsequently changed its position in some respects, but I want to know whether you have any recollection now of what your

attitude was at the time toward making available approximately two-thirds of the island of Tinian to the United States for possible military use?

Tenorio: Well, my feeling at that time was that Marianas had been a strategic area for the United States. I think it's proper for us to accommodate the needs of the military. I learned during the discussion that the people of Tinian would be provided with all kinds of benefits. In addition to that, the two-thirds of the Tinian land would also be made available for lease-back in the event that the military is not going to use it. So, I think at the time I was for it; I agreed. Sometimes it bothers me when some of our people feel that, you know, the Tinian people will be neglected because they have moved out from Tinian and back to Saipan or whatever so the military can take the whole island. I don't think it's fair to say that because the U.S. was not really trying to get the whole island. Of course, they tried to get as much on Tinian as possible. But again, I believe during the Covenant negotiations, in the event there was a war or anything, I think the U.S. can use all of Tinian or the whole Marianas at the time. So what's the use of arguing. It's better that we just kind of agree. Okay, you need part of Tinian. Two-thirds is not too much, you know; at that time we did not have that many people in Tinian and they could live without it. And, also, the Tinian people would be offered all kinds of benefits in the event that U.S. military installations were established in Tinian. So I was in support of the military use of Tinian.

Willens: There were several very outspoken leaders on Tinian who had different views on this subject. One of the opponents of the U.S. military request was Felipe Mendiola who was Mayor. What is your recollection of Mayor's Mendiola's resistance to the U.S. request?

Tenorio: I am not sure that I want to make any comment now.

Willens: Joe Cruz, recently deceased, became a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission and is generally regarded as having been a very colorful and astute politician. Did you have any personal dealings with Mr. Cruz with respect to the status negotiations?

Tenorio: Yes, Joe Cruz was a very close friend of mine. We went to school together, as a matter of fact, he was my classmate during the Japanese time. Joe Cruz was a very intelligent individual, and I really admired him for his foresight, too. We did discuss some of the issues once in a while, especially when we got together and he asked me how I felt about particular things. And, of course, I always told him how I felt and he was very open-minded. He also was telling some of our people how he felt about the negotiations because, you know, at the time he was living in Tinian. I think he, if I'm not mistaken, also agreed on the two-thirds military retention area for the military. So, you know, he's pro-commonwealth status at the time.

Willens: Do you think that he represented the Tinian people fairly?

Tenorio: I think he did. He represented the majority of the people of Tinian very fairly; you know, he won another re-election. Like I said, Joe Cruz was one of the very colorful individuals. One time, I admired his kneeling down and singing God Bless America.

Willens: Well, everybody remembers the story about his singing God Bless America in the United States Congress when they were considering the Covenant. Were you there at the time?

Tenorio: No, I was not there but the news came very fast here and I was told. He was really a character and a very intelligent individual too.

Willens: Well, that's the point I'm getting at. Everyone remembers the colorful stories. I worked with him closely for a couple of years and I also had the sense that he was a very shrewd politician and leader in the best sense of the word, and I wanted to get your independent judgment of that issue.

Tenorio: Well, like I say, he's very colorful. He's a very intelligent individual. He had no hesitation about letting you know how he felt.

Willens: A few other things happened during your time in the Congress of Micronesia. There was an issue about the return of public land by the United States to the districts. The United States announced a new policy in November of 1973, but the Congress of Micronesia was unable to enact appropriate legislation, that is to say, legislation that the United States thought was acceptable. Do you have any recollection of participating in the debate on that subject?

Tenorio: No, I was not involved in that.

Willens: There was also some resistance from the Tinian representatives to a moratorium on homesteads and economic development in Tinian during the negotiations. Congressman Atalig tried to make a major issue of this moratorium in the Congress of Micronesia during 1974. Do you have any recollection of Congressman Atalig's effort to get the Congress to support the people of Tinian in opposing the moratorium?

Tenorio: If my reflection serves me right, I think at that time during the negotiations they tried to stop the homestead program because there already had been discussed what would have to be done in the event that the negotiations would go through. So, continuing to issue a homestead would not really help the individual family on Tinian because that would force them to improve the homestead. So I think that was one of the major reasons, you know, to kind of delay the issuing of homestead permits.

Willens: Did you feel at the time that the decision of the United States to impose a delay or moratorium was a necessary step for the U.S. to take?

Tenorio: If I'm not mistaken, I think at that time there was a reason for that because the United States, I mean the negotiator at that time, tried to give a choice to the people of Tinian to be relocated in certain areas and to provide them with all the facilities and everything so they could just move from their present location to the new location where the new buildings would be put. But, like I say, unfortunately, the people of Tinian did not approve that; they preferred to stay in the same area. But I think the United States was fair in trying to convince them that they would provide a whole town or a village with complete housing facilities, sanitary, hospital, and everything so that they could transfer from one side of the island to the other side. So, I will not say that the U.S. was not fair in trying to do that.

Willens: During your time in the Congress of Micronesia, the Congress enacted a Micronesian Constitutional Convention Bill. Did you have any views at the time as to the desirability of having a Micronesian Constitutional Convention and having the Marianas participate in it?

Tenorio: If I remember correctly, I think the Marianas just did not want to participate in that convention. So, like I say, we entrusted our leaders to make that decision and choice; and many of our people also, our so-called leadership from the community, were not totally opposed but preferred not to participate in that.

Willens: During the same period that you were there the Congress of Micronesia failed, I think more than once, to pass what was called a revenue sharing bill that was strongly urged upon the Congress by the Marshall Islands representatives and others. Did you personally support some kind of revenue sharing that would enable the Marshalls and the other more advantaged districts to recover more of the money that they contributed by taxation?

- Tenorio: Well, at the time I was in the Congress and even after I became Governor, we had similar problems with Rota and Tinian. I firmly believe that the revenue sharing should accommodate those islands who really need it. I mean that one particular island making a fortune should not keep all the revenue they have because it's not fair. I mean it should help other districts that need some funding too, for their infrastructure or education. So, I did not totally share the view of the other districts in wanting to keep all their revenues. The Marshalls at the time were producing more revenue, so I was kind of begging them to, you know, consider sharing their wealth with their brothers and sisters on the other Micronesian islands.
- Willens: Do you think that the failure to enact revenue sharing was a major factor in the ultimate decision of the Marshalls to go off on a separate course?
- Tenorio: I think so. I think part of it, because at the time the Marshalls were generating good revenues and I think that eventually the Marianas were also generating good revenues. I think that's one of the reasons for the disagreement in the political arena at the time.
- Willens: You mentioned earlier that there were also cultural differences among the districts. Some commentators or historians have focused on the Congress of Micronesia and tried to evaluate whether it served to bring the districts together in a meaningful way or whether it proved to be a forum in which the differences became more apparent. I don't want to overstate the issue, but do you have any judgment based on your two years as to whether the Congress of Micronesia fostered unity or did it contribute to divisiveness?
- Tenorio: I don't think the leadership was persuaded to foster unity.
- Willens: You don't think it did foster unity?
- Tenorio: Well, most of them tried. What I'm trying to say is that they had to answer to their constituents on each island. If we look back during the old days, Chuuk was the most populated area, and even there they have different customs. The customs in that period were very strong. You could be educated, go to school, and graduate from college, but when you returned you would share the same customs of the time.
- Willens: Right.
- Tenorio: During Trust Territory time many students were given an opportunity to go to school in Guam, Honolulu, or the mainland. Some of them, of course, took advantage of that and went to school, graduated, and returned to their home island. Of course, they end up getting a good job or being a politician, but at the same time they continued to follow the old traditions of the local community. The customs in some parts of Micronesia were very strong and they may be—I don't know if they're losing them now—but they have a very strong binding effect among people in the community over there.
- Willens: You make the point that people in the Congress of Micronesia ultimately had to represent their constituents and the constituents had different traditions and different interests. Who within the Congress of Micronesia did you think was a strong force to try to keep people together and to try to work out some common future?
- Tenorio: Overall?
- Willens: Overall. I mean who were the people from the other districts that you remember as being leaders in the Congress of Micronesia for unity of some kind?
- Tenorio: At that time when I was a member of the Congress of Micronesia, I had great respect for the President, Nakayama. Also I had very high respect for the deceased Lazarus Sali. I met on several occasions with the Marshalls' leader, Amata Kabua, and I found him to

be a very fair individual. By just sitting and talking to him I could feel, you know, how he felt on certain matters where we have differences. But I found him to be at times very accommodating to help the other Micronesians. I never had any problem with the members of the Congress of Micronesia, because my philosophy is that if I need something done, I have to go and try to get their support. I don't believe in fighting on the floor or arguing, you know, that we have been misrepresented or because of our small population. What I always do is go to the committee and ask them, please help us, you know, we need your help. So we had been getting good support from the members of the Congress of Micronesia.

Willens: There was one issue in the Congress of Micronesia that you did you speak out on and that related to the change in the foreign investment policy by the United States in 1974. Secretary Morton made a policy statement in January of 1974 and you and several others spoke out on the subject. What was your general attitude about foreign investment in the early 1970s?

Tenorio: Well, during the early 1970s, the Trust Territory established the Foreign Investment Board. I believe that was the name of the Board. Of course, the Board itself was good, composed of people who have to review all these investors who are seeking to come in. But there were also times when very limited information was provided in other areas, you know, where we needed some investment. To me it looked sometimes that they did not want to help foreign investment establish businesses in the CNMI. At that time, I sometimes wondered whether the federal government was really interested in establishing foreign investment so that we could improve our livelihood. At the same time maybe it was because we were still under the strategic area, you know, that they didn't want to completely open the whole Marianas. If I recall correctly, it was during President Kennedy's period that foreign investment was more or less opened. That's when we started getting people coming over to look into what type of investment would be available to the Marianas and at the same time the Foreign Investment Board would review whether it's a good investment for the community over here. Basically at the time we wanted to see more investors established in the CNMI.

Willens: You were employed by the Saipan Shipping Company during the 1960s but, as I understand you, you were still in favor of greater or faster economic development in the 1960s and early 1970s than the Trust Territory Administration was permitting?

Tenorio: Yes.

Willens: Did you have any concern as an employee of the Saipan Shipping Company that more foreign investment would be more competition for your company?

Tenorio: Well, I believed that more competition would be better for the community because they have more selection and maybe the price will be, you know, better if we have more competition on the island.

Willens: I have heard that as soon as more retail stores opened up on Saipan prices did become more competitive.

Tenorio: Exactly what I said. That's why I wanted to see more business establishments open, so the people have more choice and get a better bargain.

Willens: From some of the people that I've talked to, there seems to have been also some concern about foreign investment in terms of aliens, whether from Japan or elsewhere, sort of taking over the business from the community. Was that a view that was held by many people in the Marianas?

- Tenorio: That was a view, to be quite honest, by some of our leadership because they felt if we have foreign investors on the island they would take over all the business in the Marianas. And I kept telling them that it's not true. I mean if you embrace it and you do things right, I thought you could survive. And I believe that's what happened. Local people who were doing business 50 years ago are still doing business now, though maybe on a smaller scale. Joeten, for example, is still doing business. Villagomez is still doing small business right now; he's fortunate that his business is, more or less, in real estate, I believe.
- Willens: Did Villagomez own one of the early retail establishments?
- Tenorio: Yes, Villagomez owned one of the biggest retail and wholesale store, too.
- Willens: Did they sell that interest?
- Tenorio: He sold that interest. But going back, Villagomez established his business with Joeten's encouragement, because Joeten is the one who asked him to establish his business. He even provided him with some merchandise to start with.
- Willens: And then he competed with Joeten?
- Tenorio: Like I said, Joeten was a fair individual. He's not trying to do everything by himself, but he also tried to see that other people would benefit from doing business. Manny Villagomez was pretty much helped; Joeten encouraged him to do the business.
- Willens: Did former Senator Borja also have a family retail operation?
- Tenorio: Yes, former Senator Borja also had his own merchandising retail store. I think Senator Borja was also encouraged by Joeten, if I'm not mistaken. I remember Senator Borja was the Secretary-Treasurer of the Saipan Shipping Company for so many years and I worked under him and he had his own business. Joeten encouraged him, I believe, to open his own small store.
- Willens: What was your assessment of former Senator Borja as a political leader?
- Tenorio: Well, I have a very high respect of Senator Borja. I believe Senator Borja was a real politician. He helped a lot of people individually. He helped in many ways in assisting in documentation or whatever people needed to do—not only for personal things but for correspondence. O.T. Borja was always there to help them. He was a very helpful individual.
- Willens: As I understand it, the District Administrator, who was Frank Ada for many years, had the responsibility for collecting the views of the Marianas people with respect to foreign investment and then those views would be sent up to the Foreign Investment Review Board in the Trust Territory Administration. Is that correct?
- Tenorio: I think so, yes. That's what I said; we have this local Foreign Investment Board that would review the applications and all these things, and then they would have to send it up the Trust Territory headquarters for approval or disapproval.
- Willens: Did you think that District Administrator Ada shared your views as to the need for more or faster economic development or did he have a different view?
- Tenorio: I believe so. I remember there were some applications for investment that were being approved, so I believe he felt too that we needed some investors coming over here to build up the economy of the Marianas at the time.
- Willens: So you think that he generally shared your views on the subject?

- Tenorio: I am not sure, but I assume so. Otherwise he could have just, if there was an application, he could just not submit it to the higher office, you know, unless he felt that we needed it. In other words, he could have just said no at the time and, if he made that choice, it would never go up to the higher office for approval.
- Willens: I see. So there really was no procedure for appealing his denial of an application?
- Tenorio: No, no. If he denied it, that's the end of it.
- Willens: After the United States issued this announcement of changing policy you made a speech before the Congress of Micronesia. It happens to be a speech that I have seen in the press. You said that the lifting of foreign investment restrictions was "a step forward which has long been desired by the Congress and the people of Micronesia." But you added that, "in moving forward Micronesia must also move cautiously." And you pointed out that some of the dangers in doing business with outsiders "cannot be minimized" but you recognized the need for foreign capital and you wanted to make sure the Congress of Micronesia and the six districts instituted some procedures to make sure that these applications are viewed carefully and so forth. What were you personally worried about at the time that you made that speech?
- Tenorio: Well, when I made that speech I wanted to make sure that each district had its own board to make that decision. In other words, I just didn't want foreign investment to be completely open, you know, with no regulation or anything. In other words, I wanted to see that each district had a separate board so that they could make their own choice as to the type of investment. Because I hate to see people from all over the world just coming and doing whatever they wish. As a matter of fact, that Foreign Investment Board Law remained until—I forgot the exact date—when I was in office it was there and I asked the Legislature to keep that Foreign Investment Board intact. When they passed the budget of the CNMI when I was in office as Governor, they repealed the Foreign Investment Board.
- Willens: I think it was about 1983. I'm not sure. I understand that you thought each district should have its own control. Was it also your view that each district ought to be able to make its own decision about foreign investment without review from the TTPI?
- Tenorio: Yes, from the TT at that time. Because what's the use of opening it when the TT will always have the right to say no. So, even if we approve, the TT could say no, then we failed the whole purpose of opening up the area for foreign investment.
- Willens: I've seen some indication in the materials that, even with the change in U.S. policy, there was not any real increase in foreign development in the Marianas until about 1983 when you were Governor and I believe the applicable law was repealed. What is your recollection of the extent to which there was an increase in economic development and foreign investment as a result of the change of policy in 1974?
- Tenorio: I think one factor was the change of policy, the lifting of the foreign investment prohibition in the Marianas. And I believe at that time also a major factor was the bubble economy at the time.
- Willens: Which kind of economy?
- Tenorio: The bubble economy, you know, the economy in Japan and other areas had increased so much that they didn't know what to do with their own money, I believe.
- Willens: So, you're talking about the time when you were Governor and there was the great influx of Japanese investment in the Marianas. I recall on a personal level coming back in 1979

or thereabouts, and there didn't seem to be much more development that had taken place in the last three or four years, but then when you come back ten years later, of course, the island had significantly changed.

Tenorio: Yes, not much. When I was first elected, I never traveled for trade mission because at that time I felt we needed to improve our infrastructure and other things before we go out for a trade mission to invite people to invest. But during the early part of my Administration there were people who were coming here and were mostly interested in building a hotel. Tourism was at the time our major industry, but it was very slow. We were not even sure that tourists would continue to increase at that time. Then later on there were other interest groups who came over, like the garment manufacturers. When the garment manufacturers came over, we thought that would create employment and some revenue for the Marianas. But at that time even the investors were concerned whether they could recover their investment, because there were other destinations that tourists would like to go to, and Saipan was not the right place at the right time in the early part of my Administration.

Willens: Did you run for re-election for the Congress of Micronesia in 1974?

Tenorio: I did. I ran for re-election and I lost.

Willens: It was in 1974 that the Territorial Party won most of the seats. Ed Pangelinan was replaced by Pete A. Tenorio and Herman Q. Guerrero was also defeated. Do you recall what the issue was that resulted in your defeat at that time?

Tenorio: Well, I do recall. I think at that time people had been transferred from one precinct to the other so that one particular individual could be elected. And also, if I recall correctly, right after they counted the result of the election, I was encouraged to protest and seek a recount of the election because they felt that I won the election. But, like I say, I always feel that if I run for an office, whatever the result, I'm satisfied. And I lost, I believe, by four votes—a very small margin. They wanted me to seek a recount because they believed that I could have maybe have won the election. But I did not request any recount or anything.

Willens: Was that the seat that Herman R. Guerrero won?

Tenorio: Yes.

Willens: And he was the only member of the Popular Party who won, as I recall, in that year.

Tenorio: And on top of that, in that particular area there was a Carolinian majority.

Willens: You ran then in 1974 from a different area than you had run from before?

Tenorio: No, same area.

Willens: Same area, but this time you had an opponent who was at least part Carolinian?

Tenorio: Part Carolinian. But then, of course, later on Herman Guerrero also ran for governor in 1981 with Froilan.

Willens: That's right. I want to come to that. Just before the Covenant was signed in 1975, the Rota and Tinian members of the Marianas Political Status Commission made a strong request that the Covenant contain a guaranty of a bicameral legislature in which the upper house would have equal representation from the three major islands. That request was agreed to by the Commission after considerable debate, and it now is part of the governing structure of the Commonwealth as you well know. Do you recall having any sense at the time as to whether this requirement of a bicameral legislature was a good idea or a bad idea?

- Tenorio: I think from my own perspective it was a good idea, to be quite honest, because I wanted the other districts also to be sure that they would be represented. I think that Saipan has been the most populated area, we have so many congressman compared with Tinian and Rota. I think that three senatorial districts composed of three Senators each is fair. I believed when I was in office that if you need something, we'll try to work as a group, as a family. If Rota needs something today, we'll give it to you; if Tinian needs something, we'll help Tinian; also Saipan, you know, should get certain things. So having equal representation in each senatorial district in the Senate would be fair for the whole Commonwealth, because if the people of Tinian join with the Saipan senators, of course, that means the majority and the benefit is for the people. Of course, I hate to see that a bill would not be passed because of many differences of opinion, you know, and by having three senators equally this could sort of balance the Senate itself.
- Willens: The leaders from Rota and Tinian argued strongly that their islands had been unfairly or unequally treated by the Saipan majority under the TTPI. Did you have any judgment at the time as to whether that complaint was valid?
- Tenorio: I don't think it was valid. I think it's a very unfair statement because Saipan was treated just like Tinian and Rota. Fortunately, during the TT time the headquarters was here. Of course, you know, we had more opportunity for employment but the people of Tinian and Rota were never denied the opportunity to move to Saipan or get a job over here. In fact, many people on Rota and Tinian were given jobs on their own island. During the Trust Territory time, I believe, the whole budget for the Trust Territory was less than \$3 million until Kennedy increased it to \$6 million plus. So, we cannot expect that the people of Tinian and Rota will get as much as the other Micronesians. I'm referring to the other districts during Trust Territory time. I think the Trust Territory had responsibilities to the other districts. So we had to share the budget that was been approved by the U.S. Congress.
- Willens: Did you play any role in the campaign before the Covenant was voted on in the plebiscite in 1975?
- Tenorio: Only a minor role.
- Willens: How would you describe the opposition to the Covenant in terms of what complaints they had about the Covenant and what alternatives they thought were more in the interest of the Marianas people?
- Tenorio: Well, at that time I was not sure what was the opposition. I believed that there were some issues that some of the opposition felt were not included on the Covenant. During that period I stated that I thought our negotiators tried their best in negotiating in good faith for the Covenant. And although we would like to see some of the sections of the Covenant improved, we cannot just totally get all the goodies. We have to give something too. We cannot just say we want all this and we don't want to give you this. So if the U.S. wants certain things, we have to compromise and we have to give to the U.S. and, based on the compromise, I thought we could improve certain sections of the Covenant. But, like I stated earlier, the negotiators should be commended for the good job they did, because we cannot get everything what we want. No such document is perfect. As time goes by, sometimes we overlook that, but when times go by, time changes, we have to either amend it or, if possible, try to improve it. So, I think, the opposition was that they would like to put in certain provisions that were kind of a guaranty or to provide only for the benefit of the CNMI, not considering the interests of the other negotiator.

- Willens: In that election in 1974 where you lost by a few votes, there are some who say that the political status was the principal issue in the campaign and that the people were telling the Popular Party leadership that they should go more slowly on negotiating a relationship with the United States. Do you remember whether political status was an important issue in that 1974 election?
- Tenorio: Personally, my feeling at that time was that it was important to the extent that we wanted, instead of slowing down the negotiations, to continue negotiating so that we could achieve it in a shorter period of time instead of waiting for another five or ten years. We wanted to see the negotiations continue so an agreement could be reached in a shorter period of time. That was my feeling at the time.
- Willens: There's some indication in the materials that Joeten thought at the time that the negotiations had moved too rapidly and it might be best to stay under the TTPI for another five or ten years. Do you have any recollection of his views at the time?
- Tenorio: At that time, Joeten personally felt he would like to give more opportunity to ordinary people to learn more about what will happen, what these negotiations are going to do. He hated to see it be done overnight; he wanted to take the negotiations to the people so they also could make that choice. Also, Joeten at the time believed, and kept insisting, that it's going back to integration with Guam. Joeten would like to go direct instead of reintegration with Guam, to go direct with the United States because Guam is under the United States. Even if we agree to integrate with Guam and the United States says, no, we are back to square one. So Joeten's feeling was that we should negotiate directly with the United States for our future status.
- Willens: But the Covenant negotiations did produce a relationship directly with the United States rather than reintegration with Guam.
- Tenorio: Exactly, that was part of the Territorial Party's dream at the time. Because in the early days the Popular Party wanted to integrate with Guam, but the Territorial Party did not. We wanted to deal directly with the United States so that we could be part of the United States.
- Willens: Did Joeten and other leaders in the Territorial Party feel that a vote on the Covenant might still leave open the possibility of reintegration with Guam, and was that something that prompted them to oppose the Covenant?
- Tenorio: No, I don't think so. Joeten did not oppose the Covenant. Joeten, as a matter of fact, although he resigned from the Commission, never did oppose the Covenant. In fact, like I say, I think it was Joeten's dream to see that the Marianas would come under the United States rather than under Guam.
- Willens: One of the groups that was opposed to the Covenant was the Carolinian community, where the Carolinians seemed about evenly divided on the subject. Is it your recollection that the Carolinian leadership generally opposed the Covenant?
- Tenorio: I think at that time there was some misconception that the Covenant would not benefit the people in the Marianas as a whole. I think there was not enough education about the Covenant, because sometimes you only focus on the bad aspects and you forget about the good ones. So if you're a group that opposes the Covenant, you just pinpoint the bad aspects so the people would argue about that, not giving them an opportunity to study the good aspects of the deal. So there was not balanced education before the vote on the Covenant. But going back, I think some of the Carolinians may have opposed

the Covenant because they always felt they were a minority, and by not providing certain benefits for them in the Covenant they will eventually, you know, lose their identity.

Willens: One of the more articulate opponents of the Covenant was Oscar Rasa. He was also elected for the first time in that election of 1974. What was your assessment of his position at the time?

Tenorio: Well, I think he was not totally in support of the Covenant, if I'm not mistaken. I believe he did not sign the Covenant as a member of the Commission.

Willens: That's correct. He and Felix Rabauliman did not sign the Covenant as members of the Commission and Oscar Rasa was a leader of the opposition during the political education campaign. Why was he opposed?

Tenorio: I really don't know the reason. I never had the opportunity to talk to him about why he opposed. The same with Felix Rabauliman. With all due respect, you know, I admired him. When I heard about his not signing the document, I never questioned his integrity. I had a very high respect for Felix, even for Oscar. But I really don't know the reason for his opposition.

Willens: There has been some comment to the effect that there was not enough time for political education between the signing of the Covenant in February 1975 and the voting on it in June. What is your opinion on that subject?

Tenorio: Well, my personal feeling at that time was, to be quite honest, that time is of the essence. In other words, the people wanted to see the Covenant approved as soon as possible because the majority of our people would like to be part of the United States. So even with little education, people learned from passing information by word of mouth. That's why the Covenant was approved by about 78 percent, I believe. The people knew the advantages of being part of the United States. That's the main reason why we approved the Covenant.

Willens: Did you have any personal dealings with Mr. Canham, who served as Plebiscite Commissioner and then as Resident Commissioner after separate administration?

Tenorio: No, the only dealing I had with Mr. Canham was when I was with the 5th Legislature. He was the Resident Commissioner at the time. I was not associated or involved with other things that were going on.

Willens: You ran for the District Legislature then in the fall of 1976 which I believe took place during the First Constitutional Convention. Did you consider at any point running as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention?

Tenorio: No, I did not. What happened was that my kid brother was running. He was a member of the Constitutional Convention.

Willens: Which brother was this?

Tenorio: Juan P. Tenorio.

Willens: Juan P. Tenorio?

Tenorio: He was running for the Constitutional Convention so, you know, the family was pretty much involved. I wanted to see other people involved so that their ideas could be brought into that Convention. I was encouraged to join the Constitutional Convention at that time. But, like I say, since my brother decided to run, I said, okay, I will help you out. I did not seek that election.

- Willens: Were you still employed by Saipan Shipping during this period of time?
- Tenorio: No, I was out of the Saipan Shipping Company.
- Willens: Where did you go to work then after you left the Congress of Micronesia?
- Tenorio: I had my own small business at that time.
- Willens: What kind of business was it?
- Tenorio: I had a little vending machine and pinball machine.
- Willens: What persuaded you to run for the 1976 Legislature?
- Tenorio: Well, I thought my politics were over when I lost my second term, but my friends and supporters kept telling me, don't be discouraged, run for it. So I said, why not? So I did. When I won the election for the 5th Legislature, I said, okay, at least I will try to do things that could help our community. Unfortunately, the District Legislature was only one year, then we had another election for the Commonwealth government. And again my supporters and lots of people encouraged me to run for the new government of the Commonwealth. So I said, okay, I'll try, and if I win I'll try my best to serve you people. I believed that the same thing happened again after my four years in the Legislature. I told my family, okay, this is it. I wanted to join my family and spend more time with my kids, because they're growing up and I like to see them go to school and all these things. But again I had this encouragement from the local community to run for the office of governor. That possibility never appeared in all my life until, you know, on the last day, when my wife didn't even know that I was running for governor until somebody called her up on the telephone in San Diego. All the kids were in San Diego going to school there. I sent them there for education. So that's the first thing she learned second hand. That evening she called me up and said, "What the hell is going on?", you know. "Why didn't you tell me you going to run for the governorship?" Well, this is just preliminary, it's not official yet, just my name will be tossed around.
- Willens: In the 1977 election between Carlos Camacho on one ticket and Joeten on the other, what were the principal issues that divided the two parties?
- Tenorio: I think the principal issue at the time was that Joeten was a very established businessman and our economy was not that prosperous. Some people thought that if Joeten became Governor maybe he would control all the businesses in the CNMI—which is completely different from Joeten's perspective. And again, I think the Democratic Party at that time was very strong. Even back in 1978, the people were about 70 percent Democrat and about 30 percent Republican.
- Willens: But in the 1977 election both houses of the Commonwealth Legislature were Republican and you became Vice President of the Senate. Why was it that the people voted for the Republican members of the Legislature but voted for a Democratic governor?
- Tenorio: Well, I think I was pretty much involved in that. Some of the Democrats were leaning toward the Republican. In other words, people were beginning to be more sophisticated during this election period. They would vote for an individual who they felt would serve the needs of the people. Not like during the old days when, you know, if you're a Democrat and a candidate, you're a sure winner, you don't have to worry. But from 1978 on I think people were beginning to be more articulate and to vote for persons who they felt would do best for them. So, it was unfortunate, I don't why Joeten lost the election at that time, but it was by a very small margin.

- Willens: One question that has been raised is whether the first Commonwealth government, whether it was Republican or Democrat, was prepared to take over the institutions of government that were shaped by the Covenant and by the Constitution. Did you have any sense at the time that the executive and the legislative branches were well-prepared to assume these responsibilities?
- Tenorio: I personally believed that we were prepared to take that responsibility. Although some of us did not complete our college education, we had people who were working for us and we let them do all the research. Although unfortunately it did not work out, we felt that if the Executive Branch and the Legislative Branch worked closely hand-to-hand based on the Covenant, the CNMI would be successful. But we had a hard time from the beginning. Maybe either the Legislature was not ready or the Executive Branch was not ready to accept some of the changes that were anticipated in the Covenant.
- Willens: The Office of Transitional Studies and Planning had prepared a series of studies to help the new Commonwealth government implement its responsibilities. Do you know whether Governor Camacho and his cabinet used any of these studies?
- Tenorio: I think that's another reason. I think Governor Camacho just shelved all the studies of the transition. As a member of the Legislature we reviewed some of the issues where we recommended approval or some legislation. We did follow that. As a matter of fact, if I recall, we issued a joint resolution asking the Governor to review the transition report so that we could consider and implement that. Unfortunately, like I say, the Governor did not want to do anything with the report of the transition. I believe he just put it aside. And also, after the first or second year in office, the transition recommendations and report were kind of obsolete, to be honest.
- Willens: Yes.
- Tenorio: You know, the transition report was good before the Covenant come into effect, but afterwards I think some of that had to be changed again. But it was never revised or anything. They should have kept the transition report and revised it based on the Covenant. So some of it was kind of obsolete when the Covenant come into effect, so it didn't work.
- Willens: As I recall, Pete A. Tenorio was head of the Office of Transitional Studies and Planning but when that office was absorbed into the Executive Branch under Governor Camacho, he was replaced, I believe. Is that correct?
- Tenorio: Yes, that's correct. That's what I say. What the Governor should have done was to review some of the sections or revise the areas that needed some revision so that it could be improved. But, unfortunately, I think they just almost totally ignored it.
- Willens: As I understand it, the Governor had some difficulty getting his appointments confirmed by the Senate during the first few years. Was this a question of different political allegiances in the two branches of government or was there something else going on that accounts for that record?
- Tenorio: I think it started with a little animosity between the Legislature and the Governor.
- Willens: And what prompted that?
- Tenorio: Well, I think the Legislature passed a budget for the Governor, I believe, and the Governor vetoed the Legislature's budget. So the delegation from Rota was not too happy about it. As a matter of fact, all the legislators were very unhappy, because you cannot operate other branches of government without any funding.

- Willens: What was his basis for that?
- Tenorio: I really don't know. I totally forgot about it, but it was vetoed. So the senators from Rota and Tinian are very unhappy about it. I think there were some other issues or differences between the Executive and the Legislature. Being from Saipan, sometime I'm caught on a spot because I have to make a decision. Some of the appointments for the directorships were denied because of the Governor's action. But that totally changed in my second year when I became President of the Senate. I think I told the members of the Legislature very frankly that, "Hey, listen, we have been very unfair to the Governor. The Governor never asked us who to hire, you know, we hire whoever we feel will help us. I think the Governor's also entitled to make his selection. If the individual's qualified, I think it's only fair for us to approve the nomination of the Governor." So from there on, I believe, we did. In fact, one time there were four votes for rejection, four for approval, and I had to make the final decision whether to reject or to approve. And I have no choice. My conscience told me that the individual was qualified, the Governor needed him, so I did vote for confirmation.
- Willens: Were you criticized as a result?
- Tenorio: I was kind of criticized—that it looked like I had deserted the Party or the group. But I said, this has nothing to do with the Party or the group; I think it's only fair that the Governor should appoint somebody who he feels he can work with. In other words, we cannot tell the Governor who to hire; let him make that choice and if he fails, that's his problem, it's not our problem.
- Willens: In the second Commonwealth Legislature the Democrats did get a majority in the House of Representatives. That was the same time at which you were President of the Senate with a Republican majority. Did the fact that the two houses were under different political leadership help solve the problem with the Executive Branch?
- Tenorio: Not really, because, there was still some animosity even between the House and the Senate at that time. But, of course, the Democratic majority [in the House]—although not getting instructions from the Governor—were at least communicating and listening to the wishes of the Governor. So there were times when we had some differences.
- Willens: I understand that one of the lawsuits during the Camacho Administration related to the denial of Covenant funds to Rota and Tinian?
- Tenorio: Yes, what happened is that the Legislature passed the CIP funding for Rota, Tinian and also for Saipan. It was not a denial, because I think that we met the requirements of the Covenant, which was half a million dollars for Tinian and half a million dollars for Rota. So never less than half a million has been appropriated for Rota and Tinian. But I think that at one time the Legislature passed \$1.8 million or something for Rota CIP and the Governor vetoed it. So I think that's what prompted the lawsuit—that the Rota Covenant funding had been denied.
- Willens: I see. So the Governor was objecting to giving Rota more than the Covenant required?
- Tenorio: More than the Covenant. Although the Governor met the requirement of the half a million dollars for Tinian and Rota, he did not want to give more than the Covenant required.
- Willens: That eventually was resolved in favor of what the Legislature had proposed, was it not?

- Tenorio: Well, eventually it was resolved that the Governor had no authority to withdraw the money. But I think they were entitled to the \$500,000 and could get it anytime. I think later on the budget was signed.
- Willens: Including making CIP funds available at more than \$500,000?
- Tenorio: More than the 500,000, yes.
- Willens: What were the issues in 1981 when you ran for Governor?
- Tenorio: I believe at that time the issue was the economy. One of the biggest issues was our standard of living here, and the infrastructure.
- Willens: Were there concerns that the economy was slow and the infrastructure was deficient?
- Tenorio: I think the concern was that the economy was not that good and we still had a lot of unemployment. There were students graduating from high school who had no place to go. In other words, those students who wanted to further their education would need some scholarship help or assistance from their family, but many families were not able to do so because our economic level at that time was still very low. So those were some of the issues at the time.
- Willens: As I understand it, the Democratic Party produced two slates because Governor Camacho ran for re-election but did not get the approval of his party. As I recall, Herman R. Guerrero ran on one ticket, and you beat them both handily. Did the division in the Democratic Party help your party get majorities in both houses of the Commonwealth?
- Tenorio: I think maybe, yes. On the other hand, I think at that time I would have preferred to run one against one rather than have three of us. When you have three people running, you know, you have to make three choices, two choices out from the other one. But I think I was lucky. I beat them, even if they combined their vote I still beat them. As I have said, I think at that time people were becoming more sophisticated in selecting people who they really felt would help the community—rather than on a party basis.
- Willens: You did have a Republican majority in both houses at least in your first two years.
- Tenorio: Yes, we had a Republican majority for a time. But after the off-season election we had a Democratic majority. But I was able to work very closely with that majority.
- Willens: Most people recall your service very favorably, which is a great compliment to you. One of the things that people point out is that you were able to work with the Legislative Branch. Could you give me your judgment as to how best in the Commonwealth one can try to secure cooperation between the Executive and the Legislative Branches?
- Tenorio: Well, I always was a firm believer that we have three branches of government and we have to respect the other branches. The Legislature makes the laws. I never at any time tried to tell the Legislature what to do. But there were times when legislators would visit my office and ask me how do I feel about something, and I am very open to them. I would say, “I’m very happy you people come over; let’s sit down, let’s work it out.” As a matter of fact, my success with the Legislature was that I kept telling the Legislature that if you people pass a good law, this law will reflect well on you guys, not me. I only sign the bill, you pass it. In other words, the legislation came from you guys, so whatever legislation that is good for the community that you pass will be in your favor. Of course, I sign the public law. But they will be given the credit of passing it. And I would say also, if we need some appropriation for a certain agency or for a certain need within our community, I would say, if you people appropriate that money, people will remember that the Legislature made the appropriation. See, the Governor is just like staff of the Legislature. You guys pass, we

try to do what we can to make possible what you passed. So in that way I worked with them very closely.

Willens: Well, that's an interesting statement. Did you as Governor have a legislative program that you wanted the Legislature to enact that might address infrastructure problems or foster economic development? I mean did you have an Executive Branch program?

Tenorio: Yes, I did, we always had our own program, but I never put it in writing. I always call the Legislature and say, "Hey, come here, let's sit, let's have coffee." We go over it over coffee and say, "I like to see this thing, if possible, go through." Like I say, I like to give the Legislature some credit, too, because if I tell them to do certain things, some of them kind of felt reluctant to do it because it's coming from the Governor. But if we sit down and we discuss some of these issues, they feel also that it's good, instead of me writing them a letter, they will just come up with their own bill, or I will ask my attorneys to draft a bill and I just give it to them and invite them to improve it or do whatever they please and try to pass it as soon as possible so that we can implement the bill. I was lucky. I was able to—not get what I want—but at least, you know, we shared our differences and then we just compromised on some of the issues.

Willens: You said earlier that the economic development that took place during your first term resulted in part from the economic prosperity in Japan and the Japanese interest in finding new places to invest their funds. What steps did you and Legislature take in your first term to make the Commonwealth an attractive destination for foreign investment?

Tenorio: Well, the Tax Task Force was established during my term when the IRS was implemented in Saipan. Under the Covenant we could have our own tax system. We appointed members of the private sectors and other community people to be involved in coming up with some recommendation on the type of tax system that will benefit not only the government but also the private sector and the public as a whole. I think that is one of the reasons that some of these developers came over here and took advantage of that.

Willens: Was it the rebate system that made the tax environment attractive?

Tenorio: Well, of course, one advantage is the rebate. But if you look at the intent of the tax system, although we have the rebate, we have the gross receipts tax and all these things. It's a simplified tax. Everybody pays tax. Under the Covenant, I believe, we have to follow the IRS similar to what Guam does. Some people misconstrue the facts when they say we rebate 95 percent. They don't realize that the rebate is 95 percent above what you already paid on the tax. So what I'm trying to say is that if you pay 100 dollars on our local tax and under the IRS you supposed to pay 150, you take the 95 percent rebate on the 50 dollars. It's not a 95 percent rebate of total tax collected. But during the old days some people misconstrued that. Again, it was never discussed, but during that time if we had to follow the IRS tax, I don't think the CNMI would ever have collected any tax revenues because there would be a lot of people who would be refunded. Of course, there would not be any 95 percent rebate anyway; we follow the IRS. But there would be a lot of people would not be paying tax because they don't meet the salary or the business levels. And not only that, also they were required, I believe at that time, there was a law passed by the U.S. Congress that you have to refund an additional \$200 to every qualified taxpayer.

Willens: What is your recollection of the circumstances under which the garment industry began to invest in the Commonwealth?

Tenorio: Well, when the garment industry came over to the CNMI the tourist business was not that established and we did not have that many hotel rooms at that time. So the

Legislature and the government were looking for other types of industry that would create employment for our local people. That's one of the reasons why the garment industry was established here in the CNMI. And at the same time the garment industry took advantage of the Headnote 3A under the Covenant.

Willens: To what extent did you and your advisers try to analyze the influx of aliens that would come with the new industry?

Tenorio: Well, it was sad because we never anticipated that we would have the influx of so many aliens at that time. But at the same time, I think during my review with my staff and the Attorney General, we were aware that we had the authority to regulate immigration in the CNMI. My feeling at the time was that, if and when the influx would hamper or create problems to the CNMI, under that authority we could deport them or deny entry to anybody. So it was not anticipated that the growth would demand so many alien laborers at that time.

Willens: But during your eight years as Governor there was almost constant economic growth in the Commonwealth, wasn't there?

Tenorio: Yes, during my eight years there's constant growth in the Commonwealth, but at the same time we appointed somebody to study the alien laborer situation. I think we prepared a booklet. I forgot the title of that, but I appointed Mr. Kosack to review the issues. I don't know if you remember that?

Willens: Yes, I've interviewed Mr. Kosack and he showed me a book he did on trade issues after he left the Attorney General's Office.

Tenorio: I think there's some recommendation also as to the type of legislation to be considered by the Legislature. And we worked with the Legislature. That's why we put a certain requirement in the law that, if you need so many aliens, then you need to employ a certain number of local people. If you have no local employees, then you're not entitled to hire any alien labor. So a certain number of local employees must be employed before you bring in any alien labor.

Willens: How do you think that's worked out?

Tenorio: Unfortunately, it did not work out as well as we anticipated. Not only did the garment industry keep increasing, but other investment was coming in, like hotel construction. So it just did not totally work out.

Willens: Mr. Kosack remembers that the United States agencies seemed to have some difficulty in understanding the Covenant and its application here in the Commonwealth. What is your overall assessment based on your years as Governor regarding the extent to which the federal government on the executive side has supported the Commonwealth?

Tenorio: My assessment of the Covenant, like I've always said during my eight years, is that the Covenant itself is good. And it's sad to say that some people have different interpretations of some sections of the Covenant and sometimes we cannot agree on the interpretation of the Covenant. But, like I say, it's a good document. The only flaw in the Covenant is that certain agencies interpreted it differently. As a matter of fact, even within federal and local agencies there were different interpretations of the Covenant. So that sometimes caused confusion regarding the Covenant. Also I think there is a provision in our Covenant that the Commission on Federal Laws be established by the President of the United States, and the report would be submitted and reviewed by the U.S. Congress so that the CNMI would be exempt from those federal laws that will not be beneficial for the

- CNMI. Unfortunately, I think that did not work. But still, my personal feeling is that the Covenant is a good document and we're very happy about it.
- Willens: How about the Department of the Interior and the other agencies that administered programs here in the Commonwealth? Is it your general experience that these federal agencies were supportive of the Commonwealth?
- Tenorio: Well, although there are times that I'm frustrated too. You know I have differences with some of the views of the Interior Department, but I never had any problem because I always tried to find time to sit with them, to talk with them, regarding our needs over here. So I never had any problem with the Interior Department. Like I say, we have some differences, but whenever we have differences I tried to find time to review the issues with them and ask them to consider our point of view.
- Willens: What was your experience in dealing with the U.S. Congress.
- Tenorio: Yes, my experience with the U.S. Congress was that the Congress was very sympathetic to the needs of the CNMI. We almost always got whatever we needed. If we could justify it, that we needed money for the infrastructure or for other purposes, they're ready to help us. So I never had much problem with the Interior Department or the U.S. Congress.
- Willens: At the time you were Governor, at least during the last several years of your Administration, the Washington Representative was from the other political party. Did you have any sense about whether the Washington Representative ought to be either an appointed position or elected in a way that would ensure that he or she would be of the same party as the Governor?
- Tenorio: I always believed in the election of that office. If the individual is elected I think he should be answerable to the community, to the public. But there are times when there is a difference of opinion between the elected Washington Representative and the Governor's office over here. I never took it very personally. I'm always open-minded. If we made a mistake or we needed some help we always tried to get all the facts straight. I think the U.S. Congress or the Interior Department will always refer any issue to the Office of the Governor, not to the Washington Rep, because the Governor represents the whole population of the CNMI. There are sometimes different opinions, and then we create a problem because the U.S. officials have different views from the Washington Rep and from the Governor. Sometime perhaps the U.S. Congress or the Interior Department wonders what was best for the CNMI. But again, the present Governor was the Washington Rep. When I was first elected, Eddie Pangelinan was in Washington. So I never had any problem with Eddie at the time. Froilan, sometimes he had different views, but I think in the end the U.S. Congress and the Interior Department always accepted the position of the Governor of the CNMI.
- Willens: What do you think are the principal problems that the Commonwealth is facing today?
- Tenorio: The principal problem the Commonwealth is facing today—aside from the labor abuse issue—I think we still need some additional funding from the U.S. for our infrastructure. We still have some infrastructure requirement for the homesteads. The government keeps issuing homesteads and we don't have any sewer line, or water or power, installed to serve the homesteads. It's not fair for the government to issue a homestead permit and leave all these health hazard matters unattended to.
- Willens: Focusing on the alien labor issue for the moment. Do you think the people in the Commonwealth are prepared to have a slower rate of economic growth in order to exercise more control over the number of aliens in the Northern Marianas?

Tenorio: I believe actually we have already reached the peak of economic growth. I think the reason why we still have this many aliens on the island is because of the construction boom. But now that construction is slowing now, I'm sure a lot of these construction worker will be returning home. Of course, probably we still need some maids and some farmers. But if the economic situation is slow, that will automatically balance the need for alien recruitment. If you have farmers and you have so much produce that you cannot sell it, you have no choice but to release your farmers. I believe that it should be controlled to the extent that they're only approved for entry if they are really required for a specific job. And right now, it's like an open port over here, I believe. People can come in without any visa. They come in as a tourist and eventually end up on the island as an illegal alien. Either they're working or they're just staying here, overstaying for so many months or a year. So that's a major problem that we have now.

Willens: You mentioned that you send your children to the mainland for schooling. What is your assessment of the extent to which the educational program and facilities here in the Marianas need improvement?

Tenorio: Well, I believe the educational system is good over here. When we moved to the United States, we were still aliens. That was prior to 1978, during Trust Territory time. The education here was very limited. So what we did, we sacrificed, we bought a house in San Diego and we put all our kids in our house and we send them to a grade school, to high school, through college. And my wife really sacrificed; staying there, going back and forth once in a while to visit them, just for education purposes. But after the education improved, of course, I have grandchildren now, I'm very satisfied with the educational system over here. But, like I said, when we first moved it was TT time and the education was not that bad but, still, if you want to go college you have to go to Guam or the mainland. So that's the reason why I moved my family there. It was a very difficult decision and costly, but I think it was best. I always believed in good education and, when I was elected in office, I always saw that education would be funded and provided the materials needed for the student. In fact, I was very proud at the time because I think our school had been accredited by the U.S. school authorities during my term.

Willens: Are there any other comments you'd like to make for the record, Governor Tenorio, either with respect to your tenure as Governor or with respect to the Commonwealth as it stands today?

Tenorio: Well, I have been out of the office for the past six years now. I continue to watch what is going on. I don't want to miss the local paper, the newspaper in the evening, learn some of the things that are happening. And I would like see some of the biggest issues that we are facing now, the alien labor situation and the so-called abuse of foreigners, be resolved as soon as possible and the guilty individuals should be prosecuted, if necessary. We need to try to control the influx of aliens to the CNMI so that this thing will not continue to happen. I also hope that we continue to maintain our economic prosperity. With the number of students graduating from high school and also coming back from college, I wonder where are these kids are going to work eventually. The most important step that the education program should take is to continue to have the college as the technical school, a trade school for different fields that are required for the service of the hotels, tourism and other areas of business in the CNMI.

Willens: Thank you very much, Governor Tenorio. I really appreciate your help.