

INTERVIEW OF JOAQUIN S. TORRES

by Howard P. Willens and Deanne C. Siemer

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- Willens: Joaquin S. Torres served in the First Constitutional Convention and has had a distinguished career in the Commonwealth in the public sector and in the private sector. Jack, thank you very much for being available to assist us on this project. Could we begin by asking you when and where you were born?
- Torres: I was born in Saipan on May 26, 1947.
- Willens: What are the names of your mother and father?
- Torres: My dad's name is William S. Torres. My mom's name is Rosa S. Torres. The S in my dad's is Salas and my mom is Sablan.
- Willens: And was your father also born in Saipan?
- Torres: I believe he was born in Rota.
- Willens: What do you know about the history of Torres side of the family?
- Torres: Not really too much. Actually my dad was born out of wedlock. So it was something that we don't really talk about it. [For] people here, it was unacceptable at that time. I found out from my uncle before he died. So I really don't know much about the Torres side family history. And I think its because of that stigma. I think that is way it is not discussed.
- Siemer: About the Sablan side?
- Torres: The Sablan side. My mom has, I think, there was eleven in the family, six boys and five girls.
- Willens: Your mother's father, which Sablan was he?
- Torres: Jose Sablan, he is the real Sablan. Some of the Sablans are borrowed.
- Willens: Could you explain that for us?
- Torres: I guess everybody wanted to be Sablan because Sablan was the Mayor and he was like the Chief of the Chamorro community. Some families borrowed that name. The same as Manny Sablan, the Yapese. He was raised by Sablan but actually he was not a Sablan. They are Carolinian, half Carolinian, but raised by a Sablan so then he changed the name to Sablan. But they were not the original Sablans.
- Willens: But your grandfather, Jose, was a real Sablan?
- Torres: Yes, the original Sablan family.
- Willens: How many brothers and sisters did you have, Jack?
- Torres: There were six of us altogether, four brothers and two sisters.
- Willens: What are their names?
- Torres: John, manages the Bank of Saipan; myself, second; then the third brother, Ramon, is working for a court in San Francisco; and my youngest brother, Lee, is the Commissioner of Education. My oldest sister, Maria, works for the Governor. And my sister, Elizabeth, I think she works for the nursing home right now. She is a retired registered nurse.

- Willens: Where were you educated?
- Torres: Here, at Mt. Carmel from kindergarten up to 12th Grade. Then Rockhurst College in Kansas City, Missouri.
- Willens: When did you graduate from high school?
- Torres: In 1965.
- Willens: Did you go immediately to Rockhurst?
- Torres: Yes.
- Willens: And did you stay there for four years?
- Torres: Yes.
- Willens: What did you study there?
- Torres: I majored in political science and minored in economics.
- Willens: Did you come home during the summers while you were at Rockhurst?
- Torres: No. It was too expensive to come home.
- Willens: Were you on a TTPI scholarship?
- Torres: I was on a scholarship from the school.
- Willens: From Rockhurst?
- Torres: Yes.
- Willens: Was there a competition for that scholarship?
- Torres: I believe so. I was picked from my class to go there. Basically Mt. Carmel was run by the nuns at that time and nuns were teaching here and had their home base in Kansas City. I believe that they had some relationship within the Mercedian missionaries. That was never explained to me how; I was just picked and I was asked if I wanted to go. And, of course, I did. In my days not too many people had that opportunity. Actually I got a Trust Territory scholarship to go to Guam but the States at that time was out of the ordinary. Not too many kids during my time were being offered an education outside of Guam. And if you were a little bit smarter they would send you to Hawaii.
- Siemer: Is that the school where Jesus Borja went?
- Torres: Yes.
- Willens: Were you the first to go there?
- Torres: No. Manny Sablan and Steve Pangelinan were the first. Manny graduated from Mt. Carmel, too. Then Jesus came. I think I was in my second year already when he came, second or third year. Jesus, he was selected too to go to that school.
- Willens: Looking back at the mainland college experience now, do you think it was superior to the educational opportunities available in Guam, for example?
- Torres: No, not superior in terms of education. I think education comes from the individual, what you learn and what don't learn. Now the thing that I value most from that school is discipline. I don't believe I would have finished college if I hadn't gone there.
- Willens: Why do you think that?

- Torres: Because Guam does not have too much discipline. I didn't like it at the beginning. You see, we were required to study. I mean this is a Jesuit school.
- Willens: How did they enforce that?
- Torres: Well, they had the Resident Assistant going around. Every floor had its own Resident Assistant and he goes and checks. At 7:00 p.m. you must be on your desk studying.
- Willens: Were they surprise visits or did you know they were coming?
- Torres: Well, you get into trouble if he doesn't find you studying. So I couldn't go down and watch T.V. after dinner because I had to run back and be at my desk studying. Because this guy is going to come around and check. He checks every night.
- Willens: How long were you suppose to study every night?
- Torres: The requirements were 7:00-9:00 p.m. But I got so used to it, I stayed up until 12:00 studying. So I appreciated that, but I didn't like it. But now when I look back at it, I was very fortunate because I did real good my first year. When Manny Sablan and Steve Pangelinan went there, they were on probation their first year. I didn't go through that. And that was because of the mandatory study hours.
- Willens: Did you feel that you had been well-prepared at Mt. Carmel?
- Torres: I didn't think so. I had a difficult time with college English. But I survived.
- Willens: To what do you attribute that difficulty?
- Torres: It was not a focus here. There was not much emphasis on it. I guess the focus was religion. Their primary mission was religion first, then the total individual, then knowledge about everything that you need to know. But it was not a college prep. Although most of the graduates from Mt. Carmel, I think came out pretty good.
- Willens: At the time Mt. Carmel was considered a better educational provider than the public school system in the TTPI?
- Torres: Definitely. I think Xavier in Truk was number one. I think Mt. Carmel would run close to it. Again, in my time.
- Willens: Did you come home right after your graduation from Rockhurst in 1969?
- Torres: Yes.
- Willens: What employment did you take at that time?
- Torres: I worked briefly for Frank Ada and the Trust Territory government.
- Willens: What was your job with Mr. Ada?
- Torres: Basically a management intern.
- Willens: How long did you stay there?
- Torres: I stayed three months. Then I left and I taught at my old high school.
- Willens: How long did you teach?
- Torres: I think only six months? I couldn't take it.
- Willens: Why not?
- Torres: Because I came back too young, and I was getting involved with the students. I was pretty well known before I left, when I was in high school. I excelled in school, academically, and you know in a small town everybody knows you.

- Siemer: The school used to post those grades.
- Torres: Yes on the charts, they put your name up.
- Willens: Were you an athlete also?
- Torres: Yes.
- Willens: What was your sport?
- Torres: Baseball.
- Willens: What position?
- Torres: Shortstop.
- Willens: That's a great position.
- Torres: I played for the school. I played on the summer league. So I was well known. See when I got back, very young, and some of the students were pretty close to my age. So it came to a point where it was either I get in trouble or I get out. So I better get out.
- Willens: So you made the decision to leave.
- Torres: So I left that environment. Of course, I had been gone for four years. So I am back here and I had all that energy. Some of the students would come and pick me up at the house. And, of course, you know when things are available you don't say look, let's pay for it first.
- Willens: Where did you go next after that experience at the high school?
- Torres: I worked as a Legislative Liaison Officer for the Mariana Islands District government.
- Willens: Under the District Administrator?
- Torres: Yes.
- Willens: What were your duties as a Legislative Liaison Officer?
- Torres: Basically to monitor legislative actions in the Legislature, bills, both directly when it's transmitted. They were sent over to my office for action and that involved sending the bills to the Attorney General and subject area departments for comments. Then when I would consolidate those comments and send it over for action. I would prepare either an approval message or a disapproval message.
- Willens: Those were the messages that you would transmit forward to the District Administrator?
- Torres: Yes.
- Willens: So you were concerned with the District Legislature? Did you have any responsibilities with respect to the Congress of Micronesia?
- Torres: Well, yes. I attended sessions of the Congress of Micronesia, but only to be concerned with legislation directly affecting the Mariana Islands district. That is secondary because the Trust Territory had a liaison officer, the same position as I had in the District.
- Siemer: Who was it back then?
- Torres: It was Ray Diaz. I think he is dead already.
- Willens: Related to Francisco?
- Torres: Yes.
- Willens: Brother?

- Torres: I don't know. I really don't know if they are brothers, but they may be. So this guy, that is his primary task and he would send things down to us. But since the Marianas and the Trust Territory did not see things in the same manner, we do our own checking and monitoring of the Congress.
- Willens: Was that a decision that the District Administrator Ada made?
- Torres: It was a decision that I made.
- Willens: You decided that on your own initiative to cover some of the activities of the Congress of Micronesia?
- Torres: Yes.
- Willens: Just to get the dates right, Jack, would you had begun work as a Legislative Liaison Officer in about 1970?
- Torres: Yes.
- Willens: And how long did you stay in that position?
- Torres: Maybe I should just give you a copy of my resume. It has been so long. From that I went and headed the Board of Elections as the Executive Director.
- Siemer: You worked for Canham in that capacity?
- Torres: Yes.
- Willens: But you think you were there earlier, in 1973 or 1974?
- Torres: I may have some problems with the dates, but those are all documented. I will provide you with a copy of my resume.
- Willens: Let's just step back a minute and tell me what your father did for a living?
- Torres: My dad worked for the Saipan municipal government. He headed the Public Works Department.
- Willens: Did he ever run for public office?
- Torres: Yes, he was a Commissioner of Chalan Kanoa District 1 village. That's the only elected office that he held. But he was active politically.
- Willens: With what Party?
- Torres: With the Popular Party, which is now the Democratic Party.
- Willens: Why did he affiliate with that party?
- Torres: I guess philosophically he was poor so he has to support causes of the poor. Actually the lines were pretty well drawn. You had Joeten, Borja, the businessmen on the other side. The division of the parties I believe at that time was like the traditional U.S. party split. And I think one of the things that split the people was the issue of joining with Guam and going directly with the U.S.
- Willens: The Popular Party took the position that unification with Guam was a preferred course of action.
- Torres: Yes.
- Willens: When you came back in 1969 had you already established a political affiliation with the Popular Party?
- Torres: Yes, it was my dad's party.

- Willens: It would be very rare for a child to depart from the party of the parents?
- Torres: Well, it wasn't permissible at that time. You had no choice.
- Willens: Is it more permissible today, do you think?
- Torres: Yes. Parties are no longer a way of life here. It was then.
- Willens: When you came back and worked briefly for District Administrator Ada and then later on after the high school experience went to work for him again, did you have view as to whether Mr. Ada was a member of one of the two parties?
- Torres: Yes. He was the member of the Territorial Party. But my dad who is a Popular Party member was a very good friend of Mr. Ada's. Frank Ada is the most brilliant person in the Commonwealth. And I still feel that way today. I am saddened by the fact his talents were not fully utilized. He's probably the only person that I really admire and respect. The only person I would bow before and I don't go to that point. It's just not my character. But he made a lasting impression on me.
- Willens: As a District Administrator, he was obligated to enforce the rules of the High Commissioner within his District, isn't that correct?
- Torres: That is correct.
- Willens: Did the leadership in the Legislature, which was Popular Party leadership, sometimes question his decisions because they felt he was partisan?
- Torres: Yes. There was a great deal of conflict. But Frank Ada is a person who could call people and smoke things out. There was an advantage to. There were only a few radicals, like Danny Muna for instance. Those who were not connected to the government. The disadvantage that the Legislature had at that time was that they were mostly government employees. They were part-time, so you can't really rock the boat because you know right after the session you have to go back to your work in the Executive Branch.
- Willens: Did that temper some of the controversy?
- Torres: Yes, that's right.
- Willens: When you came back, in 1969, it happened to be the year the people here on Saipan and the people on Guam voted with respect to unification and it was rejected by the Guamanians. Do you have a recollection of how you personally felt about the rejection by the Guamanians?
- Torres: Well, I really didn't care one way or the other. Basically integration is for economic reasons. All of this other stuff is secondary. It's economic.
- Willens: Can you elaborate on that?
- Torres: Yes. Guam's standard of living was higher than over here. Trust Territorial money trickled in and we're actually a minority. Most of the money was being spent in the districts.
- Siemer: Did Guam have a different and better base?
- Torres: Because the military was there. So people over here had relatives in Guam. They see they have the fancy cars, fancy homes, and we were still in wooden frame houses. So people here felt that if they joined with Guam that those benefits would trickle into Saipan more than what we were getting under the Trust Territorial government.
- Siemer: Did you have any relatives in Guam at the time?
- Torres: Yes.

- Siemer: What branch of the family is there?
- Torres: I have the Torres family and the Sablan family, too. And they had money. I could see then the benefits of the military and stuff like that.
- Willens: Under the circumstances then, was the rejection by the Guamians a serious matter for your relatives here on Saipan?
- Torres: Yes, for the people here. But not for me because I felt that with my education I didn't have to hang on Guam's coat to better my economic lot. I felt that the opportunities were unlimited. It's what I wanted to go to do that would make the difference.
- Willens: Did you have the sense that, if you wanted to, you could go to mainland and find a position and succeed economically there because of your education?
- Torres: No, because to tell you the truth my whole four years I hated it. The reason why I hated it was actually I went to school with colored friends from British Indies.
- Siemer: Coming from Catholic schools there as well?
- Torres: Yes, and they were discriminated against. They couldn't go to the same barber shop that they allowed me to go to. They thought that we were Hawaiians so I was accepted. I was not considered Mexican because I used to wear a sweatshirt of the College of Guam and the University of Hawaii. On my way to the States I stayed in Hawaii for a month. So people in Kansas City thought that I was from Hawaii. That was okay. But I started with a number of colored students who were in the same deal that I was in. But barber shops, restaurants discriminated against them. So I hated Americans for that.
- Siemer: You were there in the 1960's when the civil rights movement began to grow?
- Torres: Yes. I have a dislike for Americans, and anything white, although I am married to a white woman. But except for my wife, I hated everybody else.
- Siemer: Did that extend to the Americans who were out here?
- Torres: No, because they were scared of us. It is fear because they were a minority here. Not the expats, but the ones in the private sector. Because the expats over here were the ones calling the shots.
- Willens: In the TTPI Administration?
- Torres: Yes. So you really couldn't do much, but I still hated them. Then that hate kind of continued with white people. I will tell you now I still have very strong feelings for that.
- Siemer: Do you still see that discrimination when you go to the States?
- Torres: No, I really don't care, it doesn't matter to me anymore. Because economically I know I am better off than most of these people.
- Siemer: Economically the Marianas is better than a lot of places in the States.
- Torres: Yes. You know that feeling is still there. And it's not that they did it to me. I mean they treated me well, but it's just that they did it most to my friends, my very close friends. And I cannot remove that.
- Siemer: Did you travel elsewhere in the United States while you there?
- Torres: Yes. Well I didn't have any problems except for Milwaukee. Parts of Milwaukee are pretty racist. But I was welcomed there, too, I didn't have any problems.
- Willens: What's your connection in Milwaukee?

- Torres: My brother, John, was going to school.
- Siemer: Where did you meet your wife?
- Torres: I met her in California.
- Willens: During your college years?
- Torres: On my way back after school. She is just different. She is so different from other Americans that I had the privilege of meeting my four years in Kansas City.
- Willens: When you came back here in 1969, did you want to think of some future political status that was not related to the United States?
- Torres: No, because I had so much admiration and respect for my dad that, even with the education that I had, I thought he was right in what he wanted. I felt that if he wanted integration with Guam, I would support that. It was fine with me. Because I didn't have to have it, but I would support it because he wanted it.
- Siemer: What did you think about the proposals that began to emerge at the Congress of Micronesia with respect to a unified Micronesia that would include the Marianas?
- Torres: With the experience of the Marianas with the Micronesians, I felt it was bad to have something that involved everybody. The split was something that everybody over here wanted because of the discrimination. I guess for the lack of a better term I say discrimination. We're a minority. We are just different people. I mean we are together by historical accident. But I think if the Marianas, before they were joined, were asked to vote they would say no.
- Willens: What are the key differences in your mind that brought about that feeling here in the Northern Marianas?
- Torres: You know Chamorros are just like white Americans, they are racist. The Chamorros think they are superior even to the Carolinians. We have problems because the Chamorros think they are better than the Carolinians.
- Siemer: Well, the Chamorros adapted very quickly to American economic ways, and some of the other areas of Micronesia were more resistant.
- Torres: Yes. I think it's because of their family ties with the people of Guam. I think that was the reason they think the American way of life was the best way. Because they see their relatives in Guam. So that became a model for everybody in the Marianas.
- Willens: One of the leaders from the Northern Marianas who was in the Congress of Micronesia was Dr. Palacios. And from time to time in the late 1960s he would speak out in favor of a unified Micronesia. Do you have any recollection about that view being expressed?
- Torres: You have to understand that Dr. Palacios is part Carolinian and he went to school with, he was exposed to, Micronesians.
- Willens: Many of the leaders here in the Northern Marianas went to PICS or other educational institutions where they met Micronesians.
- Torres: That kind of influence is important.
- Willens: Do you think that it was a view that was shared broadly within the Territorial Party, for example?
- Torres: I don't think it was shared. The desire of the Territorial Party was to affiliate with the States. I think it was a minority view within the Territorial Party and that was because of

influences from our leaders' experiences with other Micronesians. I believe that this area mapped out in time as Micronesia relatively speaking is a small community. Friendship means a lot. It is a big thing for natives out here. You do anything for a friend basically. Dr. Palacios was advocating Micronesian unity because of his Carolinian heritage and because of his experience with Micronesians in his school years.

Willens: What did you think of Joe Cruz as a politician in those days?

Torres: Super. He was probably the best politician that the Marianas produced.

Willens: Do you have any specific recollections of what he did or said?

Torres: The people believed him because he was true to his mark for his time. He said the right things at the right time. He was very convincing. I use to go with my dad just to listen to him. He was most convincing, but he was liked a lot.

Willens: Some people have commented about his unpredictability and his occasional departure from the truth. Did that influence your view of him?

Torres: I don't think he was unpredictable; he was pretty predictable. He said things to make you feel good.

Siemer: And that was successful?

Torres: Yes, very successful, very influential. His speaking ability was just superb.

Willens: In Chamorro?

Torres: In English, too. His English was less fluent at that time because you didn't have that many who can speak language that well. I don't know where he got it. I think he was educated in Guam or something.

Willens: He spent many years on the mainland before he came here.

Torres: So that's why he spoke English fluently.

Willens: Would you regard him as one of the principal leaders in support of the relationship with the United States?

Torres: Yes, I would rank him up there.

Willens: Who else comes to mind as being in that leadership group?

Torres: I think on the senior citizens, Eddie [Pangelinan] and Oly Borja. I think those two guys stand out.

Willens: You mentioned Senator Borja, what was your assessment of him at the time?

Torres: I really didn't think too highly of him because he makes his point but keeps repeating. He bores you to death. So that is less effective. For the older folks, he was God's gift to the Commonwealth, basically to the older folks but not for the younger ones. But Joe Cruz got the attention of the young people. He got my attention. I enjoyed listening to him. During his time it was like a commanding presence. It was charisma. He was a guy with charisma and he used it, abused it.

Willens: Two of the leaders of the Popular Party at the time were Ben Santos and Herman Q. Guerrero. Do you have any recollections of either of them?

Torres: Well, Ben was the saintly leader until they started questioning his integrity by misuse of Legislature's funds. I think when that thing started, he just started slipping.

Willens: Were the allegations generally believed with in the community?

- Torres: I think so, because if you notice Ben kind of gradually disappeared from the scene. I think it made an impact. I think they linked it because they were showing figures.
- Willens: The Popular Party during the 1960s seemed to have quite a lock on the District Legislature. As I understand it there were very few members of the Territorial Party in the Legislature during that decade. To what do you attribute that strength of the Popular Party?
- Torres: Well, it is competition between the business people and the working people. It was just a tradition that the people were split up that way, like western political parties.
- Siemer: Did you think that the loss in the plebiscite when the Guamanians voted against reunification with the Marianas hurt the Popular Party here?
- Torres: Yes, I think it did.
- Siemer: More Territorial people seemed to be getting elected.
- Torres: Then direct association started to become an acceptable thing. It was the only option left.
- Siemer: The Territorials had favored that all along.
- Torres: So the people were coming around and started joining them.
- Willens: As you mentioned earlier, there was some tension between the Marianas District and the TTPI Administration in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. What do you remember being the principal issues or complaints that the Marianas people had vis a vis the TTPI Administration?
- Torres: I think funding, and appropriateness of the division of the money. We felt that we contributed a lot more than what we get back. I think the tax legislation was the one that really split us apart, the 3 percent income tax.
- Willens: Was that a decision of TTPI Administration or was that a decision of the Congress of Micronesia?
- Torres: I believe it was the Congress, and people felt that it was a way of milking us more. So I mean that was the last straw.
- Willens: What was the legislation?
- Torres: The three percent income tax. I believe there was no income tax here at that time. And they were even burning the [Trust Territory] Code in a demonstration. Herman Q. [Guerrero] was the leader at that Code burning.
- Willens: Yes, he talked to us about marching up to the Hill. Were you there for that?
- Torres: No, I was not there.
- Willens: How about the burning of the Congress of Micronesia buildings? What do you know about that event?
- Torres: All I can remember was that was just part of the package of the income tax and the people's frustration with the Congress. We were not getting a fair distribution of the funds even though we collect most of the taxes, and then the income tax on top of it. This was all part of the burning of the Code and the burning of the Congress.
- Willens: We all know that burning down a building like that is a criminal act. What did the people in the community think?

- Torres: I think people rejoiced by the burning of the Congress. They don't want anything to do with the Congress.
- Willens: Do you think that it was genuinely known in the community who did it?
- Torres: No, I don't believe anybody knew it, but I know people rejoiced of the burning. People were happy that they burned the Congress.
- Willens: What was the reaction of the High Commissioner, if you know, to these demonstrations of dissatisfaction in the Northern Marianas?
- Torres: I really don't know.
- Willens: The High Commissioner, we have heard, was somewhat frightened for himself and his family because of the agitation here in the Northern Marianas. Do you have any recollection of him expressing that concern?
- Torres: No, I don't have any recollection. Having had experience with Americans, I didn't believe that it really bothered him because we are a troublemaker minority. And as long as the rest of the districts are happy, he didn't care less. I don't think he was concerned for his life because he lives up in Capitol Hill where people don't have access to his place and with probably around the clock security. I am pretty sure that he had that.
- Willens: How was he regarded here in the Northern Marianas as an administrator?
- Torres: Funny thing about this is people don't really relate to the Trust Territory government. They were more concerned with the Mayor and their Legislature. I don't think people really cared. They only cared when they start to say that they don't get their fair share of the money or their big tax. But as far as the so-called national issue, I don't think people cared much except for the leaders. The common people aren't concerned about that.
- Willens: Based upon your contact with members of the Congress of Micronesia, do you think the burning of the building and other demonstrations had any impact on the leaders from other districts?
- Torres: I don't think it did.
- Willens: Was there any leaders from the other districts in the Congress that you had a personal relationship with?
- Torres: No, because I never cared for them. I go there to make sure they don't screw us more. But as far as having dealings with them, I didn't care for them. I just wanted to make sure that they didn't do things that would hurt us more.
- Willens: As part of that job did you try to keep up with what the Congress of Micronesia Joint Committee on Future Status was doing with the United States? That was the group led by Lazarus Salii and included other members of the Congress?
- Torres: No, I think my concern basically was that they do not include us. We were focused on our own mission in getting out and being affiliated with the United States without them. That's what we wanted. We were concerned about what they do, but I was not preoccupied with it. I was more concerned about what we were doing. Because we know that if they vote we were going to lose so it was a kind of no-win thing.
- Siemer: You needed to keep track of what they were voting on but . . .
- Torres: But there was not really much that we can do. We cannot influence it. But I think people here were prepared to be violent again. I think people have used threats. So I can't tell really

whether the threats made them finally give up the idea of having the Commonwealth being part of this political status negotiation.

Willens: In 1970 the Congress of Micronesia group rejected something that was called the Commonwealth Proposal that the United States put on the table and some of the Marianas representatives in the Congress spoke out saying, "Well, although the proposal wasn't perfect, it was something that the people in the Marianas would be interested in." Do you have any recollection now of what the reaction was here concerning that Commonwealth proposal?

Torres: I don't have much recollection. I think over here, the leaders know what the people wanted. So I think people took a pretty laid back position and let the leaders do the work for them. There was consensus of what we wanted, so I think people here felt that people like Ed Pangelinan and Oly Borja, these guys would do the job for them.

Siemer: Did you go back to the States to law school at some point?

Torres: Yes, 1975 or 1976.

Siemer: So you came back before the Con-Con?

Torres: Yes.

Siemer: Did you change jobs then when you came back?

Torres: Yes, I did. When I came back from law school, I joined the District Attorney's office.

Siemer: How long did you stay there?

Torres: For a year. 1978 was the election.

Siemer: 1977.

Torres: 1977 for the Governor. So we lost the election, so we got out.

Siemer: Did you switch at sometime from the Popular to the Territorial Party?

Torres: Yes.

Siemer: When was that?

Torres: I think at the time to run for the Constitutional Convention.

Siemer: What caused you to switch?

Torres: I can't remember. I think the reason why I switched is that the Popular Party did not agree with me. I was a member of the Second Municipal Council, in 1972, and I served two terms. It is pretty blurred. I had some problems with the Covenant and Ed was like a God to the Popular Party for you know taking this Covenant along. So you were not about to question Ed Pangelinan. You were disloyal if you questioned Ed about the Covenant.

Willens: Well in 1974 Ed got defeated in the Congress of Micronesia elections. He was defeated by Pete A. Tenorio. But there was a readjustment to let him continue as Chairman of the Commission. Could it have been in the election of 1974 where you changed your alliance from the Popular to the Territorial?

Torres: No, when I first ran for the Popular Party for the Second Municipal Council I think I came in number three out of 16. I didn't get along with the Mayor, and I had too many questions for Ed on the Covenant.

Siemer: The Mayor was Luis Benavente?

- Torres: No, Ben Sablan. I did a lot of questioning about expenditure of funds.
- Willens: By the Commission?
- Torres: By the Mayor. You're not supposed to question. There was a bunch of us who were a little radical, like the former Speaker in the Legislature. What his name?
- Siemer: Pedro Tenorio? Ben Fitial?
- Torres: No, Frank Camacho. The second time around, Frank and I lost in the Central Committee [at the Popular Party] by one vote. So I quit at that time because I felt the only reason why they worked hard to get me out from the Municipal Council was because I was asking too many questions and the wrong questions as far as they were concerned. Because I was questioning expenditure of funds. I felt it was spent inappropriately. Then I started questioning some of the provisions of the Covenant, and I was not supposed to. You were not suppose to question Ed Pangelinan because what Ed says has got to be good for the Commonwealth.
- Siemer: This was during the negotiations, you were questioning him?
- Torres: Yes, this was between 1972 and 1975.
- Willens: Was Ben Camacho still the head of the Municipal Council?
- Torres: Yes, Ben was the Speaker.
- Willens: He was also a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission. What was your assessment of him as a speaker and as politician?
- Torres: As a politician, good politician, but that's where it ends.
- Willens: Danny Muna worked for the Municipal Council at that time.
- Torres: Yes, Dan had substance.
- Willens: Did he agree with you on some of the points you were raising or did he argue with you?
- Torres: He would argue but see he was accepting also. That was the thing that bothered me. It was like the Catholic Church. You have to accept what the Bishop said. So what Ed Pangelinan and the Mayor said, you have to accept. You don't question. That was the party then, and that didn't sit well with me.
- Willens: Can you remember now some of the questions that you raised about the Covenant?
- Torres: The sovereignty thing bothered me. When I was in college, I developed a great deal of mistrust of U.S. policy. They are pretty tricky. And there are so many ways of interpreting language. Most of my research papers were done on the Asian-Pacific region, U.S. policy with respect to it and how the U.S. abused the people of the Asian-Pacific region. Change because it was committed to change it, don't keep promises and stuff like that, so I was skeptical about that.
- Willens: Were you focusing on historical behavior of the United States over the last century or some of the more current events?
- Torres: Actually, no it was focusing on the past and concluding that it is going to be the same for us. I did a lot of research on how they dealt with the Philippines and so I had some problems with the sovereignty issue.
- Willens: What did you think was the alternative to being placed under U.S. sovereignty?

- Torres: I felt then that this area was still strategic and I felt that because of what I read that the military concern was pretty strong.
- Willens: What made you think so?
- Torres: I really can't tell. It was just from reading and the emphasis on the military in the negotiations. The documents and decisions being made or changes because of military concerns. I felt that we should not give up easily. Because I know that if we don't have local sovereignty on local matters that we would just be like the Philippines were. They would just tell you what to do. The U.S. is pretty well known for telling people what to do. The way they wanted it, not because the people wanted that way.
- Siemer: What did you think back then about the capability of your negotiating team as opposed to the capability of the U.S. team?
- Torres: I think with you and with these people that we were evenly matched in brains. These guys were supported by one of the super lawyers in the negotiations. I was very comfortable with your firm. I read the book, "The Super Lawyers" and I visited your office. I saw your capability. I read up about your background, the office background. I felt very comfortable that we were not disadvantaged. Our only disadvantage was money. The only disadvantage I felt in the negotiating team was that money was very important to them.
- Siemer: Money was important to whom?
- Torres: The Marianas team. That bothered me.
- Willens: Money in terms of getting financial support from the United States in the future?
- Torres: No, that they would trade off things that are close to heart for money.
- Siemer: Were other people in the Saipan Municipal Council or other politically active people concerned about having a United States lawyer representing your side against the United States?
- Torres: No, the leaders made people feel good about their representation.
- Siemer: And people were comfortable with the negotiating skills of the members of the Commission?
- Torres: Oh, yes because they have different concerns, and I am pretty sure that our side knew that they would be fine. We are pretty focused. We know what we want, that is to our advantage, and we were backed by very confident brilliant people. They were supporting the idea that it is possible. So we started what we want already. At least that we wanted to be affiliated and then the finer details. That is just why Rasa came up. Oscar started questioning—they were the very small minority. They didn't have a chance in their questioning because people were bent. I think that anybody who gives an overall assessment of the Covenant will find we got the best. We wouldn't be where we are right now if it wasn't for the Covenant.
- Willens: What was your sense as to how the United States dealt with Guam? Was that something that discouraged you?
- Torres: See, at that time back in the 1960s, I don't think that people see that Guam is affiliated with the United States. All they saw was Guam with all these benefits. So they just wanted to part of Guam. I don't think they wanted to part of the United States. And people here didn't think that Guam was part of the United States. I didn't think their vision went beyond that. Guam was the end of their vision.

- Willens: That is interesting. A lot of people have emphasized to us the value of U.S. citizenship and the desirability of having a passport.
- Torres: At that time?
- Willens: At that time, part of the difficulty was being able to go to Guam, right?
- Torres: I don't remember. I went to Guam once in my life before I went to the States. I have a very vague recollection of what I was required to have.
- Siemer: While you were a member of the Saipan Municipal Council, had you traveled in other parts of Micronesia?
- Torres: No.
- Willens: Did you have any relatives or close friends over on Rota or Tinian?
- Torres: No.
- Willens: Did you have any dealings with Benjamin Manglona in the course of your years with the District Legislature and to some extent with the Congress of Micronesia?
- Torres: Yes, I believe he was in the Congress.
- Willens: Do you have any recollection of his views or talents as a politician?
- Torres: I think that the biggest advantage of Ben Manglona is that his heart is with the people of Rota. I guess his feeling is Rota first and then the Commonwealth second.
- Willens: Do you think that is different from political leaders on Saipan?
- Torres: No, unfortunately. It shouldn't be that way but that is the way it is. See, what people resent is that this guy wants to get everything for Rota when Rota does not contribute. That is the resentment that people have on him. Of course, he is no Frank Ada. But you have to admire the guy. He works so hard, and he cares a lot, and he gives a lot. He is just different. He is different from O.T. Borja. I think Ben Manglona is a true politician, a true sense of the word politician.
- Willens: I always heard that he was one of the most elegant, charismatic politicians.
- Torres: For Rota, yes, not for Saipan.
- Willens: One of the decisions made in the very last stages of the negotiations was to insist on a change in the Covenant to guarantee a bicameral legislature, with the three major islands having equal representation in the Senate. Do you recall having any view at the time as to whether this was a good idea?
- Torres: I think what Ben did was right. Although I don't necessarily agree with it in terms of efficiency and costs. I would like to see it unicameral, but then Rota and Tinian would not have a voice. So what he did was correct. I don't agree with it, but for Tinian and Rota that was a very good decision.
- Siemer: Back then before the Covenant was signed and while the Commission was still debating whether they would sign the draft, was Ed Pangelinan able to persuade you on the sovereignty point that the Covenant was sufficient?
- Torres: No, the decision was already made to go for it and any questions that would delay had to be set aside. It was just not allowed.

- Siemer: In the election just before that, when Oscar and Pete A. were successful. Did they tell the people that they were going to try to slow down the negotiations and look at these things again?
- Torres: I think what they did was not slow it down because Oscar is a smart politician, too. He knows that slowing it down was unacceptable. People wanted to have it done and have a vote on it. Anything that would delay it would be unacceptable. He knew that. Oscar knew that regardless of what objections he had, it was not going to matter so what he did was try to convince as many voters [as possible] to vote against it.
- Siemer: Why was that politically advantageous for Oscar?
- Torres: Well, see I think Oscar knew the people really don't know much what about is in the Covenant. They depend on the leaders to feed them. So what Oscar was smart in concluding was that, no matter what he said, the Commission was going to vote the way that they wanted to vote. So he knew that he lost it there already. The Commission was going to sign it, and they will put it up for a vote. So he lost that already. I mean it wasn't going to make a difference what he said.
- Siemer: After the Covenant was signed by the Commission, Oscar mounted a considerable campaign against it. He started a little newspaper and he gave a lot of speeches and seemed to try very hard to persuade people to vote against it. Politically why was that advantageous for him?
- Torres: I really don't know. Probably a conviction that he felt something was wrong. I guess he probably foresaw that history would declare him right that he had the vision that he could see 20 years later what this document would do to. Because Oscar always wants to be in the lime light. I think he carried on his campaign because he cared enough and he saw things that were not right. He would be remembered as that person who pointed out. I think maybe it kind of explains it.
- Siemer: After the Covenant was signed and you had a chance to look carefully at the whole text, what did you think?
- Torres: Well, I took too many poli-sci courses not to argue anymore that once the people decide. You live in a democracy, and once the last vote was counted you are going to have to accept. I mean that is democracy and you cannot spend your entire life fighting for something that people say, hey you are wrong. So in a democracy if the majority says this is how it works, we are going to ride a train instead of a bus, then you ride the train.
- Siemer: It's a very large majority as well.
- Torres: Yes. So that's where I stood. As I said, I took too many courses in government and political science to continue to fight a losing cause.
- Siemer: Was it that year after the Covenant was signed that you were back at law school?
- Torres: The Covenant was signed in 1975?
- Willens: The Covenant was signed in February of 1975 and the vote was in June.
- Torres: I had to accept it because you could see that the people worked for it. I was not going to crusade on trying to stop what people wanted. I cannot see the majority of the people on this cause that they were wrong.
- Willens: Did you oppose it up until the plebiscite?
- Torres: No, I voted for the Covenant. I was not opposed to it. I had questions that were pretty

close to heart, like sovereignty. I think there were more good things in the Covenant than bad, and overall the document was just superbly written. And, of course, you can't have everything you want. You know it was a negotiated issue and you got some, you lost some.

Siemer: What did you think of Oscar's argument during the public education program that if the people turn the Covenant down you could go back and renegotiate a better deal?

Torres: Well, he made a big point of that, but I don't think people believed him. I think the supporters of the Covenant felt that there was no assurance that this matter would be revisited, that it could be renegotiated. And that uncertainty against being part of Micronesia, there was just no choice. You know there were no choices. So they would do anything other than being part of the Micronesian community.

Siemer: As a political science major, you know there is something to seizing the moment and going forward when you can.

Torres: I think people felt that from the public education program. They were pretty realistic about the whole thing also. I think that Ed Pangelinan made that very clear. That we asked for this, we wanted it, we fought this issue, but we can't have everything. This is the best that we could get. We tried our best. And people believed that Ed is honest. Danny Muna, Ben Santos, these guys tried their best.

Siemer: For that reason it was probably an advantage to have Danny Muna there, wasn't it?

Torres: Oh, yes. The guy was pretty vocal. Joe Cruz and these are the guys you know worked against Oscar and his group. Their strategy was pretty good. They told the people that these are the areas that Oscar was campaigning on. They tried, but you just can't have everything, and they translated to local examples. Everyday experiences. The negotiators were more credible than Oscar.

Siemer: During the time that the U.S. delegation was here, did you ever meet Ambassador Williams or any of the U.S. delegation?

Torres: No.

Willens: Did you have any dealings with Erwin Canham in his capacity as Plebiscite Commissioner?

Torres: Yes.

Willens: What was your assessment of his performance?

Torres: He seemed like a very fair person. The education program was pretty neutral, no favorites, said what the document said, pretty fair, pretty neutral, straightforward.

Willens: Were you active with the Election Board at that time?

Torres: Yes, I helped.

Willens: Were there any challenges to Micronesians as to their ability to vote on the Covenant?

Torres: I don't recall, because you know the records are pretty clear. I can't remember whether there were challenges. I don't remember whether it was Constitution or the Covenant where we allowed the Filipino voters to vote.

Willens: I think that came later.

Torres: I don't know. I was not involved in that. I don't remember.

Siemer: When did you decide to run for the Con-Con?

- Torres: I really can't remember.
- Siemer: Were you out of the Saipan Municipal Council by that time?
- Torres: Yes.
- Siemer: What do you remember about your own campaign for the Con-Con elections?
- Torres: Well, I joined the group, the Republican group, even though it was to be non-partisan. Just the regular group campaigning.
- Siemer: How did you get the Republican or the Territorial Party to agree that you could be a delegate in one of their slots?
- Torres: I can't really remember how I got that. I think somebody asked me to run.
- Siemer: Was anybody else who was running related to you?
- Torres: No. I remember they asked me to join them, but who I don't know.
- Siemer: You did quite well in that election.
- Torres: Yes, I did pretty good. I was kind of surprised that I beat some of the veteran politicians.
- Siemer: What do you recall about the organization that went on among the Territorial delegates before the convention opened?
- Torres: I don't recall meeting with an agenda, because there were actually no issues. It was basically putting together the government framework. There was no division except for the Rota and Tinian issues. There were pretty much consensus on a lot of things except for Rota and Tinian. Basically Rota was the problem.
- Siemer: When the Convention opened, were you concerned about the fifty day limit to get the Constitution finished?
- Torres: Definitely. I think it was too short. Things went pretty hectic. But then you know in hindsight, we did a better job. I think that times have shown us that we should have just left the original document intact. I think people are getting fed up with the changes to the Constitution. I think the original document is the best, and I think the rejection by the people of amendments of the Constitution is significant. The original document was the best job that we did.
- Siemer: The Popular Party took a considerable beating in that Con-Con election. There were actually very few Popular Party people elected. Why was that?
- Torres: Well, I think it is a Republican idea, I mean a Territorial idea, to be associated with the United States. This Party gave the people what they want. It's a lot better deal than with the Guam deal. So I think the Popular Party suffered.
- Siemer: So you were satisfied with the Covenant and feeling optimistic.
- Torres: Yes.
- Siemer: At the opening of the Convention there was some difficulty about the way that the chairmanships and vice chairmanships were assigned. Do you remember the Popular Party being upset about the fact that they didn't get what they thought were their fair share of the chairmanships and vice chairmanships?
- Torres: You know I probably was one of the younger members and we kind of out of respect let the veterans and the senior politicians do the fighting. We basically took a laid back position. We were acting like the good kids of these veterans. Although we had the issues,

- we had concerns, we were not part of the fight. We were more concerned about doing our job.
- Siemer: As far as the internal Convention politics are concerned?
- Torres: The politics we left to them. We knew we were in good hands with these guys handling it. So I think like Ray, the brother, just we kind of took a laid back position on the internal decree.
- Siemer: Did you have much contact with Larry Guerrero during the Convention?
- Torres: No. My contact with Larry is at the Legislature. I went in there with an open mind, independent, and said that I was not going to vote party line. I supported issues that I felt conformed with the Covenant, and I had questions on rights. I didn't say much on the floor. Basically because of the time, I think I knew my limits. I didn't want to be disliked and I just wanted to be myself. See there is a thing over here that if you try to act like a big shot, people dislike you. You notice even after being back from law school and knowing a little bit about the law, I didn't flaunt what I knew. Most of the things I kept quiet. I read the proposals, attended committee meetings, and didn't say much on the floor except for some of the questions I had on criminal procedures.
- Siemer: You had already been trying cases by that time.
- Torres: Yes. I learned my lesson already by my experience in the Municipal Council. That you don't do things openly. If you want to effect changes, you do it behind the scenes because you get nowhere by flaunting things publicly.
- Willens: Before the Convention began, you were given two volumes of briefing papers that totaled approximately 1,000 pages.
- Torres: I read them all. And it was easy for me to understand them because of my background in law.
- Willens: Did you really have an opportunity to read them even before the Convention or during the Convention?
- Torres: Yes. And see those things were not too difficult for me. Because government was my major and economics was my minor.
- Willens: The effort in the briefing papers was to try to lay out the decisions that the delegates would want to face up to and the effort was not to make any express recommendations. Were you generally satisfied with the way in which the material was presented?
- Torres: I was satisfied because actually it was pretty clear. Options were raised and it basically left the decision-making to the delegates. I mean, that is how I felt.
- Siemer: Were there complaints by other delegates because the briefing papers were so long?
- Torres: Yes. It is the timing from the receipt to the opening, start of the Convention. I can understand, let's say for instance, a physician reading those volumes. For me it was not difficult because I mean that was my orientation. So it was not difficult.
- Siemer: Did you ask Larry Guerrero for assignment to the Government Institutions Committee?
- Torres: No, you were assigned. I think what happened was that I was asked where I wanted to serve. So I signed up.
- Siemer: Was that the committee you signed up for?
- Torres: Yes.

- Siemer: The committee list that was finally published didn't have you listed anywhere. Is there any reason for that?
- Torres: I don't know why my name was not listed. I only wanted to serve on one committee because I felt that was the area where I could contribute.
- Siemer: Did you come to the Convention with specific things that you wanted to accomplish?
- Torres: I was, you know, a funny thing again in light of my experience. I came in there as a consensus person, but then my position is that if I did not agree with the consensus I would risk arguing it and getting the wrath of the group. I think in criminal procedure I did raise questions because I was concerned about it. Because I just took criminal procedure and there were things in there that I wanted clarified.
- Siemer: In Article I?
- Torres: Yes, that's when I started asking questions during the session. Everything that came to the floor for a vote, I had no problem with. It just sat well with what I wanted. So I didn't raise too many questions. I asked questions and I expressed concerns during committee meetings. But during the general sessions, no.
- Siemer: How did you feel the committees operated?
- Torres: I have no complaints.
- Siemer: Was Joe Mafnas a good chairman?
- Torres: Yes.
- Siemer: Did you feel that everybody was listened to?
- Torres: I think so. Well, if someone had a problem you know it was because of time. If we do not afford the time that people wanted, it was because the length of the Convention did not permitted it. It wasn't because people want to railroad things.
- Siemer: As a younger person, you were faced with a fairly tough committee. You had Benjamin Manglona and his brother, Prudencio, and you had Joe Cruz.
- Torres: Yes, but you see I had the theories, and they had the experience. You know, looking back at it, I do not have problems with those guys. You see, you don't argue publicly with these guys.
- Siemer: Were committee meetings regarded as public in the sense that if you disagreed with them in the committee you would be arguing with them publicly.
- Torres: I argued like hell with them, but it was not public in the sense that it was an open forum where you have the audience.
- Siemer: Not on the floor where there is an audience, but in the committee which is private.
- Torres: Oh, I argued with them. But you see I had the advantage of the theory, where they had the advantage of experience. And I have a special feeling for Rota, too. And I think that is why I didn't ruffle feathers with them. Because when I was with the Trust Territory government, whenever we buy things—let's say we buy a car—our old car, the used car we send to Rota. So I was disappointed when they walked out but I understood it. Because there was yet we eat first and then the leftovers, okay you from Rota come to the table. But we would make sure that we had our share first. Then what's left, come. I understood because I shared the same experience. I knew where they were coming from.

- Siemer: Thinking back to the judicial branch article, which was under your committee, did you have any peculiar concerns with respect with that area of the Constitution?
- Torres: No, pretty much your stuff. It was a system that I was very familiar with and never had any problems with.
- Siemer: There was an amendment that you offered with respect to the rulemaking powers that the judiciary would have and in this amendment you wanted to add the underlined language. This is Amendment No. 51. Do you remember that one?
- Torres: Yes.
- Siemer: What was that about?
- Torres: When I came back from law school they had this program of the pilot system. So when I got back, my first appearance in court was in the High Court and it was a felony case, suppression. And that was my area. I took civil and criminal procedures my first year and was good at it. It was just Jeff Solo on the other side and I was the prosecutor. So I did it on suppression. Then I tried the case and got the person convicted. Of course, I was sweating like hell all the way from top to bottom. Because I was alone. The friends at the office were not available, so I had to try the case. Otherwise it would be dismissed. When the verdict came back, I won and that was my winning cases with only the first year of law school. Winning cases discouraged me from going back and getting a degree. I felt that I could learn the law on my own. I don't need somebody to teach me. I could do the research. The research portion of my first year was really good and they hammered us on research.
- Siemer: Where did you go to law school?
- Torres: New College of California in San Francisco. They had practicing attorneys teaching and research was pretty focused. So I spent every available time in the San Francisco Law Library. This is huge, even pleadings they had on file. So I go there everyday, all my spare time, go through files from start to finish and even appellate briefs. In the writing course, I had to do the appellate briefs. So I was pretty familiar with everything. I put in a lot of hours—go home sometimes 9:00 at night. After classes I was spending time in the library and on practical things. Because school is practical. Most of the professors are practicing attorneys in the San Francisco area. So I felt that I could do it and that I could learn the law by reading text books.
- Siemer: What persuaded you to go to law school in the first place?
- Torres: A friend persuaded me to go. Because he felt that I had the potential for this. I didn't go back because I felt that my first year they taught me how to do it. And I felt after the first year, the second and third was basically to learn the law by reading text books. I think the first year is the most difficult. If you get past the first year, you'll survive second and third year. I tried a lot of cases.
- Siemer: You lost very few of them.
- Torres: True, I lost only two cases.
- Siemer: When your committee talked about the Executive Branch aside from the dispute over the delivery of public services on Rota and Tinian, did you have any concerns about that article that stick in your mind now?

- Torres: I don't recall but what I can say at this point was that at that time I would be for a fairer distribution. How it's done, I don't believe it was too important. I think the problem right now is the governor or the mayor.
- Siemer: Do you remember the proposal for three lieutenant governors?
- Torres: No, I didn't buy that one. That was dead on arrival.
- Siemer: How was that suppose to work?
- Torres: Well, it just can't work. Number one, it was just a weird proposal and it was dead before it started. I felt that it was just basically image. And that's where I questioned sometimes Ben Manglona and Prudencio [Manglona]. Was it really for the people or themselves? We faced the issue of a centralized or a decentralized government or somewhere in between. A proper, a good mix that would make not only government efficient but make people feel good about their government. This is where we bumped heads.
- Siemer: I was just going to ask you about your own views about that?
- Torres: I really have mixed feelings. I believe in decentralization but then you know really a lot of it is personality. You see Camacho, the first governor, who wants to keep everything for himself. Then you see Larry Guerrero who was in between depending on his moods, took and gave. So I think the problems we are having over here is that its a very good document, it's just how people used it and it's this mistrust. There is a great deal of mistrust and I think its better now over this issue of whether centralize it for efficiency or decentralize because it makes people feel good. Or somewhere in between that takes care of efficiency and economy.
- Willens: Did you think that the delegates at the First Constitutional Convention were concerned about the executive power in a governor because of their experience with the High Commissioner?
- Torres: No, I think it's a mix of everything not only the High Commissioner, but with the Resident Commissioner, with the District Administrator.
- Willens: Well, the people here had never really elected their own executive head before. And the Constitution was going to provide for the first time for an elected governor. I wonder whether you think that the delegates were apprehensive about electing somebody to be the governor?
- Torres: I think Saipan voters were the least concerned. I think Saipan's concern was efficiency and economy. Rota and Tinian is where they were going to be under a system that is currently prevailing or are we going to make improvement over it. I think this is where they came in on that, starting with the Covenant, because of their bad experience with the District Legislature where they had one representative from each; I think three from Rota and one from Tinian was what they wanted. So that was a bad experience and I think they fought hard for it, and if I was a Rotanese I would do the same thing. So its a mix of a lot of these bad experiences and what they did is a marvel from their perspective. Like having this bicameral legislature. I guess it makes them feel better.
- Siemer: Their first effort at decentralization was this three lieutenant governor proposal which you folks quickly dispatched.
- Torres: I was for the decentralization but it had to make sense. I mean its got to stand on its own merit and we don't decentralize it for the hell of it. Just because the governor has a Cadillac, then you are going to have a Cadillac over there too; it just didn't make sense.

- Siemer: Then they came back with another decentralization proposal which was having resident department heads on each island and decentralizing services below the governor and that drew a lot of debate. What was your view about that?
- Torres: I was not 100 percent in support of it because of the cost. I foresaw the kind of problems that we are having here now. We are on this power trip. I mean this power trip, it is I guess a way of life over here. This is where I think Villagomez was in there also and trying to dilute it and them not knowing. I think they caught him on the “shall” and “may”. It was a concept that I supported but I was concerned because of the potential conflict between the resident department heads and the main department here. They can unilaterally do things without consultation. So that’s when we started putting in consultation and stuff like that. Because we knew that it was not going to work. It was basically carrying decentralization to the extent of independent states. Basically that’s what was going to happen with the kind of proposal they were advocating.
- Siemer: In the idea from Rota and Tinian also seemed to be centralizing all of the local power in the mayor. They didn’t seem very interested in municipal councils or other power centers.
- Torres: That’s when they lost their credibility. Because they were not clever enough to hide that they were doing this thing for a specific individual. That’s when they lost credibility and we didn’t care whether they walked out or not. They were pretty focused. You notice that I didn’t say too many good things about Ben Manglona. I agree with what other people say. Its integrity and credibility. A lot of the things they do are focused on maintaining the power base in Rota.
- Siemer: Very focused on maintaining a power base in the mayor’s office.
- Torres: Yes, I know. I was in the mayor’s office at that time.
- Siemer: There was a very interesting Amendment No. 80 that was offered. It is unclear whether it was offered by you or not because it was signed by Villagomez, but let me show it to you and see if you remember it.
- Torres: Yes, I think I suggested it for personal reasons. I felt that a government job is a privilege. And every person here in the Commonwealth should have equal opportunity in applying for these jobs. Although it may not be realistic because, for instance, the Legislature is politics. But you know politics come and go. You see the fact that thing did not pass probably heard that the people working for a new Legislature happen to be affiliated with that party or kicked out.
- Siemer: What became of this?
- Torres: I guess it didn’t fly because it’s against tradition. It was not a way of life over here that put everybody in the Civil Service. You are given the spoils. I guess politicians rely on those kind of people to keep putting them back in office. If you are Civil Service, you can’t have that kind of loyalty because the loyalty is through the system. They keep their job based upon their performance. If it’s not Civil Service, you keep your job because of your loyalty to the party. So it is not loyalty to a system that provides public service. It is loyalty to a party that performs or not. It doesn’t have to perform. That’s what is happening right now. People are getting paid for not performing. Sometimes they are home sleeping. But if it is Civil Service, it is loyal to the taxpayer and performing a job because the taxpayers are paying for you to do a job.
- Siemer: That was a very hard argument to carry back in those days, I think.

Torres: Of course, that is why it didn't even see the light of day. I saw a corrupt system. I saw that. It was a system of who you knew and it was a system of whether you are affiliated with a certain organization and didn't matter whether you had the skills or the talent to perform a job. My orientation changed. I went through hell to get an education. I paid for it. Not maybe with money, but leaving home for four years and not being able to be with my family. So I should get the job because I have something to contribute and I should not be told that no you can't have the job because you didn't support me.

Siemer: Or because someone else's relative is controlling who gets the job.

Torres: The people pay taxes and expect government to provide the services. And I see through the years that people were getting hired who cannot perform. Or people get paid for being home sleeping or going fishing. So I wanted loyalty to a system that is dedicated to delivering public service rather than beholden to an individual because you were out there passing brochures to get him elected.

Siemer: One of the other issues that you spent some time on with respect to the Executive Branch was the salary for the governor and the lieutenant governor. There was a considerable amount of debate about that and you were concerned about where the salary was going to be set. What do you recall about that?

Torres: I can't remember it, but if I was a party to low salary then I made a big mistake. I think I had access to the book of States. You see part-time legislature and governors were not well paid at that time. If I was a party to the low salary, then I have learned. What did it start with?

Siemer: Well, the reason I noticed it is that Felipe Atalig had proposed \$25,000 for the governor and \$22,000 for the lieutenant governor. And it maybe that you were just acting as a peacemaker here because Joe Cruz was arguing for considerably lower salaries and you proposed an amendment that set it at \$20,000 and \$18,000 and that passed and everybody was happy with that it seemed.

Torres: I think that was just to offer something that make it acceptable to everybody.

Siemer: One of the things that you did at the very end of the convention saved the Commonwealth quite a lot of money and that was an amendment which is No. 82 which took the Northern Islands out of the compromise with respect to resident department heads.

Torres: Oh, I put this thing in the hope that they would back off on the resident department head for Rota. I think that was the reason why.

Siemer: Number 82 passed very quickly and overwhelming when you proposed it.

Torres: I was hoping for consolidation so we don't have public works here, public works there. Some of these things can be consolidated so we can save money but it was something that was not there, that was acceptable. So I threw that in hoping that they would back off a little bit, and say well we are talking about cost to government. So when I threw that in I was hoping that they would back off a little.

Siemer: But they were very adamant about that, weren't they?

Torres: Yes. I said this is reckless. So it was two things I wanted to accomplish there. It was for Rota to scale back on this one for one thing hoping that maybe we could combine. Because you are talking about 1,000 population, that is the magic number. I think the population was about that. So I say, well you are going to have the Rabaulimans in the Northern Islands wanting the same thing. I mean we are going crazy with cost here. To please him, you are going to have to be like Rota and Tinian, you are going to have this kind of number to be

able to do this thing. You are talking about maybe 10 or 45 people. We are going to have a department for those few; I mean it's just crazy. So it made sense to them that, hey well we wait until we get to 1,000. Although I knew it was never going to be. But throwing it in there was acceptable to them. I think things were going too fast.

Siemer: Timing was very important. This one came along sort of at the end. You put it up, it got passed just very quickly.

Torres: Because I think it made sense to everybody. I always try to compromise things. But it just didn't make sense to have all these things even though it is nice to have them when you have the money. But it is going to cost a lot of money and it was reckless. I was for the decentralization but you are going to have to do it with restraint and its got to be something that can work. Of course, everybody wants a Cadillac but you know you can't have a Cadillac on a bumpy road. For instance, 1,000 population with a Department of Public Works, its crazy. So I guess I just tried to make sense into what we doing and at the same time make it practical for the interest groups.

Siemer: When your committee, the Governmental Institution Committee, considered the size of the lower house, in your initial report you recommended 25 members from Saipan, three from Rota and two from Tinian. The first time around before the public hearings, before the 3/4 majority vote was required, that formulation seemed to be acceptable to everyone. When you went to public hearings there was a large outcry from the business community about the cost of the government. Is that accurate, was that 25-3-2 formulation acceptable to everybody in the Convention?

Torres: Well, I think the composition of the legislature was governed by Reynolds v. Sims. So it was really not much of a choice. Of course, it's always for Rota and Tinian an issue that is very close to their hearts. So, the figures just add up because of the Supreme Court ruling.

Siemer: So the Rota people wanted three representatives in the lower house and the Tinian people wanted two?

Torres: Yes.

Siemer: What do you recall was the rationale for three representatives and two representatives when they would be so clearly outnumbered by Saipan?

Torres: Well, I believe to them it is that when one is sick then you have to have someone else. And that's a kind of stupid argument they gave—that, you know, we cannot guarantee that this one representative will always be there for the session protecting our interest. If they get sick then who will represent us. So it didn't make a lot of sense.

Siemer: How did you and the Saipan majority feel about that argument the first time around?

Torres: Well, of course, we were sympathetic, trying to keep the Convention intact. We knew that if these guys did not participate, then this was it. That was in the back of our minds. We had areas where we had to compromise. It was a forum where compromise was the menu of the day if we wanted a Constitution. We should have had a smaller legislature, but see you can't have it where one of those islands would not have a representative.

Siemer: What did you think about the cost argument of having a lower house of thirty people?

Torres: Actually, there was not really much choice because of the Supreme Court's decision. See, the Saipan number was based on what Rota and Tinian wanted and it was something like a non-negotiable thing. And it was also an issue that can break the Convention, that can paralyze the Convention.

Siemer: You thought so at an early stage even though their basic rationale for having more than one was the thought that their representative might be sick?

Torres: Yes, it didn't make sense.

Siemer: But you thought that it was a deal breaker from the beginning.

Torres: I felt that. I think some of the Saipan delegation didn't care. There were enough of us who were concerned that not compromising on some of these issues may paralyze the Convention and that we may not have a Constitution. Of course, this was not publicly discussed. But it was a very serious concern that this thing happened.

Siemer: Did the criticism at the public hearings from the Chamber of Commerce and others affect your view as to whether this was a reasonable compromise or not?

Torres: Well, they had a representative in the District Legislature and it was unthinkable to take it away from them.

Siemer: They already had two?

Torres: No, they had one.

Siemer: They only had one.

Torres: Yes. Tinian had 800 or 900 people at that time. It was unthinkable to remove the representative from Tinian. It was a given already. So everything has to work from that number regardless of what the Chamber of Commerce said it would cost. It was something that has to be there.

Siemer: After the public hearings you got it down to 2-1 for Rota and Tinian, which left Saipan with 16. And your committee brought that back to the floor and defended it very vigorously. But Ray Villagomez stood up and allowed as how he really wanted 12-1-1 if you recall.

Torres: Yes, but it didn't work based on the number and on the one man, one vote.

Siemer: You're right. You questioned him about that quite a bit. And it was conceded that 12-1-1 was worse under the one man, one vote requirement than 16-2-1.

Torres: Yes, we had to do this in conformity with the Supreme Court ruling and there was just no debate about it. I mean they can argue to death but it just can't be done.

Siemer: Ray Villagomez was not on your committee and his proposal came on the floor. Had any members of your committee talked to him about this or tried to persuade him about the committee's view that it should be 16-2-1?

Torres: No, I believe, you worked with us in the committee. It was kind of left up to you to ensure that it was in conformity with the one man, one vote rule. And there was no further argument. It was something that we cannot take away from Tinian so everything following the rule for Saipan was a given. We can't have the 12-1-1 for sure because it would violate the one man, one vote rule. I think we had a suggestion of merging Southern Saipan with Tinian under one representative. But I mean that was not ever going to be accepted.

Siemer: When the Convention did vote favorably on Ray Villagomez's 12-1-1 proposal, Benjamin Manglona and several of his colleagues got up and walked out. I wondered if you knew ahead of time that was what they were going to do?

Torres: Well, I recall that I was informed in advance that they would do that if they didn't get their way. But they had been threatening walk-out on other stuff also. So I knew it could happen but I predicted it wrongly that it was not going to happen. I felt it was kind of

remote, but it did happen and they carried through with their threats. But they threatened under the lieutenant governor proposal, too. So it was not the first time. They threatened to walk out on other issues. So I tried to kind of help in getting rid of the deadlock on very sensitive or strongly felt issues.

Siemer: One of the effects of walking out was to lower the number of votes necessary to get to a 3/4 majority. If all 39 of you were there you had to have 29 votes to get to 3/4 but if a number of people walked out—given the fact that there is at least one Rota and at least one Tinian representative still there so you still have a quorum—the more people that walk out the fewer votes you have to have to pass something by a 3/4 majority. One of the things we never understood was whether Benjamin and his colleagues factored that into their decision.

Torres: Of course, I mean Ben is a brilliant politician, but see Saipan also understands that.

Siemer: So if he walks out, he makes it easier for you to pass it.

Torres: Actually I didn't care too much about those numbers. But I think he must have miscalculated things. No, I don't think he wanted to make it easier to pass. His point is that they have to vote for anything to pass and without their votes nothing should happen.

Siemer: If he could get all the Rota people to walk out then under the legislation that established the Con-Con everything comes to a halt. No business can be done unless there is one representative from each island. But he lost at least four of his delegates.

Torres: Because those guys are more affiliated with Saipan.

Siemer: If Benjamin is such a good politician, how could he have miscalculated that?

Torres: Well, here is the thing about Ben. He miscalculated. These guys were anti-Manglona. These were the guys who started chipping away from the Rota power structure. They were tired of the power structure in Rota. Because these guys had been in power for years and years and they are still getting nothing in Rota.

Siemer: Did you know that at the time?

Torres: That they were going to stay? No. But I found this out later why those guys stayed.

Siemer: What did you find out?

Torres: Why they stayed is that is because they did not recognize these people already.

Willens: Did you think that the four of them had discussed it before the walk-out and had decided as a group to stay?

Torres: I didn't ask. I think it was David that I talked to about why he didn't walk out. Well, whether they discussed it I don't know. I asked him, "Why didn't you join them?" And he said, "We don't recognize them as the representatives of the Rota community. They had been there too long already, and we need to break the power structure in Rota."

Siemer: Before that vote, Larry Guerrero had established a special committee to try to come up with some solution. You were on that committee that Oly Borja chaired. Do you remember anything about that?

Torres: I think I mostly sat and listened because I felt that it was really a sensitive issue that only the veteran politicians should deal with. I don't have too much recollection about what happened.

- Siemer: Right after the walk-out, you proposed two amendments and they are Amendment No. 99 and Amendment No. 100 which appeared to be another effort on your part to come to a compromise.
- Torres: I guess this was an attempt to try to get them back and get things moving.
- Siemer: Do you remember trying to get the Rota delegates to come back?
- Torres: I know Ben personally so I think I may have, but Saipan also was dead set against it, the numbers. Then we had the Supreme Court ruling. So whatever numbers we give them, then Saipan is adjusted accordingly. I think maybe it was a concession but it was an assurance from the rebel Rota group. It was probably to my conversation with these guys when I threw that in. They find it acceptable that there's a need to lower it.
- Siemer: Just for the record you were proposing in Amendment No. 100 to take the Senate to 2-2-2 which would free up some costs. And then you were proposing to take a house to 14-2-1 and the two for Rota seemed to be the very sensitive one for Benjamin Manglona. Do you recall ever meeting with Benjamin after he walked out to propose that?
- Torres: No. With the rebel group, yes, but not with him. I think I talked to him. See Ben is very difficult. Once he sets his mind, it is very difficult to change. So I think those changes came about from consultation with David Atalig. David and I worked together in the government before.
- Willens: When was that?
- Torres: I think he was a member of the District Administration as an engineer for Public Works. So because I believe the Convention required at least one from each island to be present there, so we were working with them. Because if we could satisfy them then we would have them on the Convention floor and then the Convention could continue. But it eventually went down to one. Because I think they were convinced that's the only way we could legally pass this constitutional provision.
- Willens: You mentioned earlier that your experience up to that point in 1976 had persuaded you that there was need for a strong Civil Service. Were you basing that judgment on what you had seen at the Municipal Council and the District Legislature?
- Torres: The District Legislature mostly.
- Willens: And you had seen the persons working for the Legislature being fired and hired depending upon their political allegiances?
- Torres: Yes.
- Willens: But so far as the District Administration and the TTPI Administration were concerned, were they conducted on a non-partisan basis?
- Torres: Yes. You have to apply for a job and then you have to be ranked with everybody else. It has to be advertised I think for thirty days, then you are rated with everybody. So it was based on qualifications. It's a merit system. And if you are qualified for the job, then you get hired. And then if you don't qualify, then it doesn't matter whether your families are politically connected, you don't get hired. That's how I felt because of the smallest of the community and the potential for people not getting hired because they happen to not to know the person or that you're not affiliated with the winning party. You may be the most educated person and your talent will be wasted because you're just in the wrong party.
- Siemer: Were these two amendments going to be proposed and then after this exchange with

David Atalig you decided that Benjamin wasn't going to change his mind. So did you just decide to drop it?

Torres: I don't remember.

Siemer: You don't remember any meetings with Benjamin or Prudencio or any of other Rota delegates who walked out?

Torres: I may have had, but I don't have any recollection.

Siemer: Pete Ogo or Leon Taisacan.?

Torres: Actually I know those guys also. If I did talk, it would be those two people. Leon and I worked together also before.

Siemer: Was Leon working here at the time?

Torres: No, in Rota. But I think he was working for the Municipal Council or the Mayor's office. I do liaison with them, so I knew him. I may have been talking to him.

Siemer: You voted no on Article X on Tax and Finance. Do you remember why?

Torres: I am going to have to read that and try to recollect.

Siemer: It's the provision that limits the use of public funds for public purposes and limits the amount of public debt that can be entered into by the Commonwealth. It didn't seem to be a very controversial article for most people and you were one of the few people that voted against it.

Torres: Then the record must be wrong then. Why I would vote for something that requires the public funds be used for public purpose or that would limit the debt. I am for it.

Siemer: It is possible that the record is wrong.

Torres: Or I maybe I was half asleep. But believe me I am for limiting how much we go in debt and the public funds be spent for public purpose. I will be the first one saying yes.

Siemer: How about Article XIV on Natural Resources, you voted "No" on that one as well?

Torres: I think this may have something to do with the Northern Islands where I think there was some study about oil.

Siemer: There were two islands that were set aside permanently as nature reserves.

Torres: Yes, that thing bothered me. The Constitution doing that, I was just not for that kind of stuff. Because things change and this is the kind of stuff that you don't want to put in the Constitution. Although I think you can make an equally valid argument to put it in. The reason why we put in there is so that nobody changes it. But I just didn't philosophically agree that was the kind of stuff that should be part of the Constitution. It should be legislation because we don't have the studies to back that kind of stuff. It was just Manny Tenorio who wanted these birds and stuff reserved. I was not convinced that it was necessary. There was just not enough backup data to convince me that we should do that, and I was not too familiar with it. I think what I recall was that there was oil up in the Northern Islands. They found some traces of that.

Siemer: That there might be.

Torres: Or that it was going to be for storage. I am for preserving, but not in the Constitution. I don't think it has a place in the Constitution. I mean that is just personally. But he made a good argument also you put it in and then you don't touch anymore. But it just didn't sit well with me.

- Siemer: One of the other things I wanted to ask you about was Amendment No. 81 that had to do with homesteads.
- Torres: At that time very few people can afford to build a house, and we thought without bank financing you can't build a house. If you cannot mortgage it, how can you build without bank financing. And the bank would not loan money to you unless they can take a collateral in land.
- Siemer: This was just an attempt to make the homesteads restrictions more practical?
- Torres: Yes. I mean you see all these homesteads being parceled out, being given out to people. Then they build tin shacks. That was not the point of the whole homestead program. You might as well be homeless, just put up a cardboard box in the street. The only difference is that it is under your name and the other is not. I felt it was not helping people giving them land and then that's it. The banks are not going to give you any money unless you put up collateral. So the restriction is there so it won't be abused.
- Siemer: How do you think it has worked out in practice?
- Torres: Well, the bank has not been too generous with their money. Although it's not because of this; repayment is the problem.
- Siemer: You mean using the land as collateral is not a problem.
- Torres: It's not a problem. It's just that the individual doesn't make enough money. The problem is with repayment ability, not with the mortgage provision. It made it easier at least for people who have the repayment ability to mortgage and to put the land up for collateral. So that it won't be abused, I make sure that it is specifically for that purpose.
- Siemer: When the public land uses were being discussed, Benjamin Manglona brought up a principle that he wanted to establish about people who were currently on public land and had carved out a homestead would be allowed to keep those homesteads. And I don't know if you remember this, but you promptly stood up and asked him exactly what he meant by that.
- Torres: Well, see people in Rota have weird ways of making claims of public land. I think the practice is to make large claims of public land over there.
- Siemer: The Manglonas?
- Torres: Yes. As a matter of fact I guess they are getting sued now because they took more than five hectares. I didn't like that.
- Siemer: Did you know about that at the time?
- Torres: Yes. I wanted to put some sanity into that. It is okay if you apply and you were told to go ahead and go in there. But for you to just go there and make a claim—unfortunately those who were bold enough to stake a claim on public land without authorization—I mean it was just insanity. I was bothered by it because again going back, I hope I am not tarnishing his reputation, but I question everything he does. I have doubts about what he does.
- Siemer: You were very quick to pick this one up. This was sort of a side comment about well if people are already on public lands we would let them keep what they have. And you were very quick to say, how much do they have. Had you had some experience with land in Rota? Did you have practical knowledge about that?
- Torres: Yes. Because I go there often doing liaison work with the Municipal Council. All you hear is about their family. You know having this grazing land. So I wanted to make sure

that they don't make a claim with the entire island of Rota. If it's homestead, than no more than five hectares at that time. Now they reduce to 2,500. And that you can only have one claim, one parcel and you can't have more than five [hectares] either single or in combination.

Siemer: You were very successful in that Benjamin's suggestion that whatever people were occupying they could keep was beaten back. The rules applied to everyone. And yet when the public lands article came up for vote you abstained. Was there a reason for that?

Torres: I don't remember why I did.

Siemer: Let me just ask you about a couple of your other amendments. One is Amendment No. 5 which deals with health services. Can you tell us what was in the background of that one?

Torres: This is in response to something. My heart is not into this kind of stuff. I mean it was basically a response to something. I think something was offered in that general area. And to just make things look ridiculous, I must have put this in.

Siemer: The other one I wanted to ask you about is Amendment No. 37. Ask you if you can tell us what the context of that one was.

Torres: I am just against guns. As a society, we would be better off without guns. The only people that should have guns are the safety officers.

Siemer: What was the sentiment on the island about that kind of amendment at the time?

Torres: I think the people were for it. Although we had a big problem initially when this thing came up because some people had other guns [than hand guns covered by this amendment]. I remember in the Legislature this old man who had a gun, (I don't know whether it was a shotgun, 12 gauge and 22 caliber rifles were allowed. I think it was the Congress of Micronesia who enacted this law.) there was a hearing in the District Legislature and this old man had a gun other than the ones allowed. So he was before Danny Muna's committee in the District Legislature. He stood up pounding on the table, and he was speaking in English, and he said, "You can take my house, you can take my wife, but I will never surrender my gun," and he was pounding away, and that was how strong he was with respect to his gun. And they said when they were trying to get him maybe a carbine or something, but he was strong so about it. I still picture him, but he is dead now. He was pounding, big guy, pounding on the table before Danny Muna because I think he was the Political Committee chairman. He just didn't want the government to take his gun. He said he would give up his house, he would give up his car, he would give up his wife, but never my gun, never would I surrender my gun.

Siemer: I wonder if anyone took that testimony home to his wife.

Torres: I was not in favor of having guns in the community. People used the shotgun because of the fruit bat. You can't catch a fruit bat with a 22-caliber rifle, never. It was a delicacy and if people used it for that purpose, it was okay with me. You see we raise a lot of cattle and pigs and that's how we slaughter them, by shooting them. Other than that, I was not in favor of any guns. So that was eventually the law of the Commonwealth.

Siemer: Is there anything else that you recall about the First Constitutional Convention that you would have done differently looking back at it?

Torres: No, I wouldn't change anything. I wish we could, for instance, not have the ambiguity with respect to the Rota and Tinian relationship with the central government. But it was something that has to be done that way. There was no choice. I mean that was the best

choice. So I wouldn't change anything. We wish the legislature was smaller. This is the kind of stuff that we wish, but it's just not realistic.

Siemer: When the Constitutional Convention concluded, were you satisfied with the work that had been done?

Torres: Yes, although I would have liked a longer time for reflection. But I have no regrets. It's just that it was too pressured, too hectic and that's my only complaint about it. But as far as the work of the Convention, I think we stand up with any other convention and probably have a better or equivalent product.

Willens: In 1977, were you active on the Territorial Party's side in the first election?

Torres: Yes.

Willens: Did you run for office yourself?

Torres: No.

Willens: Do you have recollection, in your judgment, as to why on the Popular side that Carlos Camacho got the nomination over Oly Borja who had been such a long-standing politician in the Commonwealth?

Torres: You know this guy Camacho, he started a year or two before this. He went around at the grass roots. He basically started the whole Democratic Party with the assistance of senior citizens. So he went for the brass ring. And see, even up until now, I don't know whether you have been reading the paper where Jesus Borja said that he was going to win because there are more younger voters than older voters. And he felt that the younger voters would go for him because he is young and intelligent. And let me tell you this, up until now the parents still call the election. You vote the way your parents want you to vote even up until now.

Willens: Were you surprised that Frank Ada changed his party affiliation and ran with Dr. Camacho?

Torres: No.

Willens: What do you think were the issues that were in the public mind in 1977. Were they the economic issues that you referred to earlier?

Torres: There's not really much. I don't think people have gotten over the fact that they have got the Covenant. I think the glory of the Covenant period still lingered. They know that their lives are going to be better and they felt more comfortable with Carlos Camacho than with Joeten.

Willens: Just to bring your own career up to date, what have been your jobs since 1977?

Torres: We lost the governorship, but we won the Legislature. I moved to the Legislature.

Willens: You worked for the Legislature then? In what capacity?

Torres: I think I worked as a Senate clerk.

Willens: How long did you stay working for the Legislature?

Torres: Until we lost the Legislature to the Democrats.

Willens: Were you working in the House? The House went from Republican to Democratic in 1979 but the Senate stayed Republican.

Torres: I stayed in the Senate.

- Willens: So you were on the Senate side.
- Torres: Yes and then I moved in 1981 to the Food Stamp Office to start the program.
- Willens: And how long did you do that?
- Torres: From 1981 to 1984.
- Willens: And then what?
- Torres: I worked in the government until 1993.
- Willens: And what was the last position that you held under Governor Guerrero's Administration?
- Torres: Director of Commerce and Labor.
- Willens: And you have been with the Tan Holding Corporation since?
- Torres: Yes. We lost that election.
- Willens: Going back to the period when you worked for the Senate between 1978 and 1982, we have heard that there was strong competition between the Legislative Branch and the Executive Branch at least in the first two years of the Governor Camacho's administration. What is your recollection of the beginning of the Commonwealth and how well it began to exercise the responsibilities of self-government?
- Torres: It had a lot of rough edges for sure. Not so much because of inexperience with a new system, because it's really not an alien system; its pretty much the same system perhaps more refined and more responsible. Here is a period where you have full authority, full legislative, executive branch-type like you have in the mainland. Under the previous system, you were restricted in what you can legislate because of the Trust Territory government and the Congress of Micronesia. Here we have control over the Commonwealth, control over the lives of the people here. And it's not so much inexperience but its petty politics. Its Party—I guess that fascination or that pleasure they take in fighting among themselves because you happen to be from a different Party. Although philosophically they have a consensus that they work for the people, they have rough edges because of personality. You have a Governor who rightfully or wrongfully earned the name of King Carlos. You know, he acted like a king. I mean this an observation then. I may have different perspective now, but this a guy who was chauffeured around. People didn't like that. He had a big car, I think a Lincoln or something. He was chauffeured by policemen. He rides in the back. He was pretty shocking. That was the American way of doing things, right. And then you have a Legislature that was not too important. It did not feel that it was equal. So we have a very dominant Executive Branch. And here was a Governor who was very confrontational. He did not reach out.
- Willens: How do you think the relationship with the United States has worked out under the Covenant and the Commonwealth Constitution?
- Torres: I think it has worked fine. I don't think many people would agree with me. We got the best of most things. The bad and the good. In the end, I think it was good deal and we were better off because of it. It is not unusual to have friction with the federal government. I mean it is something we have to expect. I think that is what infuriates a lot of people. It does me, too. But that's the reality of the system. It's not different from anywhere else, although we question why shouldn't it be different. We are part of the American political family. Although, you know, being part of the political family, I think there are still questions. Some people feel that no, this is a partnership. We were not acquired.

And we are not a territory or a possession of the United States. We are equal partners. You wanted something from us, we needed something from you. You know that debate can go on and on and I guess that this thing cannot be resolved. But I think the trend in the United States is about returning government back to the people. The Contract with America is just exactly what we need. If the Clinton Administration would implement the Contract with America here in this part of the world, we should all be thankful. I think the Covenant, and our relationship with the United States, we should all be thankful for what that brought to us. You've got to be crazy not to expect some of the rough edges. That is something that comes with the package. But I think we are better off in most ways because of the Covenant and our relationship with the United States. We get pissed off now and then because of undue interference, or because we are being told that this is good for you when we say it is not good for us. But I think if U.S. policies subscribe to the provisions of the Contract with America and implement true local economy then I think we should all be thankful for everything.

Willens: I think you gave an elegant conclusion and the Speaker of the House of Representatives would be honored to have heard it. Thank you very much for taking time with us this morning.