

FELICIDAD T. OGUMORO

by Deanne C. Siemer and Howard P. Willens

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- Siemer: Felicidad T. Ogumoro served in the First Commonwealth Legislature, and has made important contributions in the private sector in the Commonwealth, running a company that does government consulting and publishing. Ms. Ogumoro has kindly agreed to an interview for our book project. Felicidad, thank you very much for agreeing to this interview. Let's start with your family background. Where were your mother and father born, and what did they do?
- Ogumoro: I came from a very poor family. My mother and father were both from families of many children. My father never graduated from high school, and my mother didn't graduate from high school either. They worked very hard to bring up eight children. I am the oldest of the eight. We have always lived our lives here except when the kids had to go out and get their college education. They would go to the U.S. to get that.
- Siemer: What is your father's full name?
- Ogumoro: Daniel Lifofoi Ogumoro. My mother name is Estefa Dena.
- Siemer: Were they both born here on Saipan?
- Ogumoro: Yes.
- Siemer: What about their parents, where were they from?
- Ogumoro: The Ogumoros were also from Saipan.
- Siemer: Where did your father work?
- Ogumoro: My father has retired but he used to work for Communications Commission of the Trust Territory government.
- Siemer: And what your mother, did she ever work?
- Ogumoro: My mother has always been a housewife.
- Siemer: When were you born?
- Ogumoro: I was born on December 1, 1949.
- Siemer: Here in Saipan.
- Ogumoro: Yes.
- Siemer: Where were you educated?
- Ogumoro: I finished my kindergarten, elementary and secondary on Saipan, and then I moved to Leavenworth, Kansas to get my college education. I only stayed there for four years and returned. And I have always been here ever since.
- Siemer: What college was it?
- Ogumoro: It was St. Mary's College run by the Sisters of Charity in Leavenworth, and I graduated with a Bachelors Degree in Sociology.
- Siemer: How did you come to go to Kansas?

- Ogumoro: Well, actually I never really thought of continuing my education until one of the Mercedarians came in and was surprised that I was sitting around and contented to just work as a secretary for the Personnel Director for the Trust Territory government. She said, you really shouldn't be sitting over here, you should get out and go to Kansas. Most of the Mercedarians were attending the same school, although there were other schools that the Mercedarians were going to at the time. But she recommended that I go to St. Mary's College. It was an all girls school when I started out and it became co-ed when I was a junior there.
- Siemer: The Mercedarians are an Order that has been in Saipan for some time, have they not?
- Ogumoro: Even before the war broke out.
- Siemer: Do they teach at Mt. Carmel?
- Ogumoro: They started out teaching. They were managing and teaching at Mt. Carmel, but then things changed. They are still around, but the Order has diminished. The number of Sisters in Saipan has really diminished. So some of them are doing other things, but the majority of the ones still living on Saipan are teaching.
- Siemer: Where did you go to high school?
- Ogumoro: I went to Mt. Carmel High School, and I graduated there in 1968.
- Siemer: Where did you go to work?
- Ogumoro: Soon after graduation, like I said, I spent one year on Saipan working as the secretary for Personnel. Then I went for my college education and returned. I returned to Personnel as a Training Specialist.
- Siemer: For the TT government?
- Ogumoro: Yes, for the TT government and still with the same department. At that time Pedro Harris, who is back in Pohnpei and very active in the government there also, was the Director of Training. So I was being trained under him and remained in training until I was elected to the First Commonwealth Legislature.
- Siemer: You ran in 1977?
- Ogumoro: Yes, in 1977.
- Siemer: How long did you serve?
- Ogumoro: I served for two terms.
- Siemer: Where were you employed after that?
- Ogumoro: After that we had a company. We got together with former Senator Herman Guerrero and established what became the company I am now heading, Western Pacific Associates.
- Siemer: Western Pacific Associates was the first company?
- Ogumoro: Yes. Then we just continued it on. It has become what is now, the Pacific Information Bank.
- Siemer: What did Western Pacific Associates do?
- Ogumoro: It was mostly doing consulting on government projects. Also a little bit of publishing, but very limited. We concentrated our efforts on providing consulting work in different areas. We were conducting workshops for government agencies that needed training, and

we were also providing consulting work for agencies, both in the private and government sectors, that needed consulting work.

Siemer: What does the current company do?

Ogumoro: The company right now is a publishing company. Our big product for the company is the Northern Marianas Yellow Pages. We used to do other publications when my husband was alive. My late husband, Francisco Uludong, started out with the Pacific Directory that was published in 1987. That is a business directory covering 23 Pacific Island countries. That directory, that premiere work for company, came out in 1987. After that we went into the American Pacific Business Directory that limited itself to the American flag territories. We stayed with that directory, we never updated it, until we started the Northern Marianas Yellow Pages in 1989.

Siemer: When did Mr. Uludong pass away?

Ogumoro: He passed away in late 1991.

Siemer: How many children do you have?

Ogumoro: We have four children.

Siemer: What are their names?

Ogumoro: I have Corbett who is 19 years old, Alan, he is 14 years old, twin girls, who have just turned 13 years old. My babies are big now, but when their father passed on they were little.

Siemer: Is your family is Carolinian?

Ogumoro: Yes, I consider myself a Carolinian, but we traced it back and my grandmother was half Carolinian and half Chamorro.

Siemer: Your grandmother on which side?

Ogumoro: My paternal grandmother.

Siemer: Your mother's family is all Carolinian?

Ogumoro: There is also some Chamorro there, but I can't really right now determine what percentage is Chamorro and what percentage is Carolinian. But I think my father's side is easy because I know that my grandmother is half. I know half is Chamorro and the other half is Carolinian.

Siemer: Can you help us by describing the organization of the Carolinian families here on Saipan? What are the principal groups?

Ogumoro: I can mention some, a couple of the key clans. But it is a very complicated social organization. That it would take some time to just go through it. The clan system is very alive in the Northern Marianas, more so now. I think there is an awakening among the Carolinians. They are really digging back to find out about their roots. The Carolinians may seem very conservative, but you know I feel that they are very traditional. They hold on to their traditions more so than the Chamorros. They are a very simple group of people. The hospitality there is no question. They would do anything for their guests, sometimes forgetting themselves to make sure that the guest is very well taken care of. Most of the Carolinians are Catholic. Their faith is also still very strong. While they are very easy people to deal with, they also hold on to the value of maintaining good relationships among the family members. The clan system it is a matrilineal society. The clan runs along the woman's line from the mother all the way down. So having girls is very,

very important to the Carolinians. Not that boys are not important. The families have joy when you have female children. It is very important to remember the family. They aren't individualists, they still maintain that strong family tie among the family members, and all of the different things that we do lead up to that.

Siemer: Is that true even when Carolinians marry into Chamorro families?

Ogumoro: Oh, yes, it is still there. I think perhaps different things that are happening because of our contact with other communities outside of the Northern Marianas. But you can still see the need to continue that bonding with the extended family. The bonding with the extended family members is still very strong. It varies from family to family.

Siemer: What clan does your family belong to?

Ogumoro: My father's clan is Ghadoli. I think my father's clan is the same as the Aghurubw Chief, the one that is buried on Managaha. Then my mother's clan is called Sauset. I do not know if you know Chief Petrus Mailo from Chuuk. They belong to that same clan as Chief Petrus.

Siemer: Where do they live?

Ogumoro: They are in Chalan Kanoa. They are also spread out all over the island. The number of clan members is still high.

Siemer: Back in the 1950's when political parties began to be organized here in the Marianas, what party did the Carolinians join?

Ogumoro: Most of the Carolinians were in the Territorial Party.

Siemer: From the very beginning?

Ogumoro: From the very beginning.

Siemer: Why was that?

Ogumoro: Actually I really do not know, because I was still very young and I was away most of the time. I was being trained to become a Mercedarian myself. During my high school years when I graduated from eighth grade in 1964 I entered training. All throughout my high school years, I was completely concentrating on becoming a Mercedarian. So you know anything that was happening outside of the boarding school, I was not involved in. It was not a convent, but we were sheltered from that.

Willens: I have heard from some source that the Carolinians were attracted to the Territorial Party in part because Joeten and other businessmen were in that Party and had been supportive of the Carolinian community. Did that strike any bell?

Ogumoro: No.

Willens: Was your father active politically?

Ogumoro: Later on when they would go to attend the campaign, but to be part of the machinery, no.

Willens: Your father worked throughout his career for the TTPI government?

Ogumoro: Yes, as a maintenance worker, a technician there. But he was not involved in the political meetings, you know, the planning and the machinery itself that gets the party going. But to attend the campaigns, yes they were there to listen. And their families, you know there is also politicking there. The families do get together and they talk about the events happening at that time. Maybe he would not be part of the machinery, but he was very

aware of what was going on. Even now, I am just amazed because sometimes I miss out. I am so engrossed in the business and I would miss out on some events. They watch television and I would go out because I want to have a cup of coffee and here is my mother and my father, two old people, as soon I sit down, "Did you see what happened on TV today?" They are so aware of everything. Good thing we have that television set because my mom and my dad do read but they are not the kind that would take up the newspaper and read. They don't speak English that well, much less pick up a newspaper and start reading. But through the television they listen and they could follow. But going back to your question whether the Carolinians were part of the Territorial Party because of Joeten, I never heard that.

- Willens: Would the candidates who were running for office come and to meet with individual Carolinian clans as part of their campaign?
- Ogumoro: Oh, yes, maybe not by clan, but the different election districts.
- Willens: They would all be part of the pocket meeting kind of approach.
- Ogumoro: Yes, this is true.
- Willens: During the 1960's and the early 1970's, did you come to have any judgment about how well the TTPI Administration was doing its job?
- Ogumoro: Well, the only thing really that I can tell you is that they were doing their very best. One of the things that stands out in my mind when I think of the Trust Territory government was one program that they had and it was through Richard Kanos, the Director of Personnel. He started what they called he "Management Intern Program" that was to allow Micronesians to be trained with a U.S. counterpart with intention that they would finally take over those management positions. And that was an excellent program.
- Siemer: Did it work out?
- Ogumoro: Yes. In fact, when I returned back in 1973 I became a part of that program. I was trained. Of course, we were being paid so low. With a B.A. coming back, if I am not mistaken, it was a dollar and something an hour. But that concept of training Micronesians to be responsible when the United States counterpart left I believe was an excellent concept. And it began to prepare Micronesians for very key positions, so that we will continue to be occupying these top management positions.
- Siemer: People felt back then that was opportunity for upward mobility in the government?
- Ogumoro: I saw that. One of the things we had run into was the discrimination in terms of salary. That was a big issue at that time, and one of my brother-in-laws was involved in that lawsuit with the United States together with Mr. Manglona. I can't remember his name. It had its own ups and downs. But one of the things that I remember very well of the Trust Territory government was that internship program.
- Willens: Where did Dr. Palacios fit into the Carolinian hierarchy?
- Ogumoro: Way, way back we used to have the practice, we have different Uts. If you go down to the Carolinian ut, you will see the names of the major clans. I believe there are five. Dr. Palacios is also one of the traditional leaders coming from one of the Uts.
- Siemer: How were the traditional leaders established?
- Ogumoro: I guess it just the clan they know who they are.
- Siemer: Not necessarily the oldest male?

- Ogumoro: It usually is the oldest one in the family. Remember it is the mother's clan. The mothers are bringing it down. It is the children of the women. For instance, my father was regarded as a chief in his own clan. He is the son of the oldest daughter. So I would think that is what is happening in the other clans. The clan determines who is a chief. But Dr. Palacios was regarded as one of our traditional chiefs. When the Carolinians had send a delegation to Honolulu during the political status meetings, I think there was a meeting where representatives from the different Micronesian entities had to attend, and as it involves traditional leaders, my father went as a representative from the Carolinians as one of the traditional chiefs.
- Siemer: Was that in the 1960's?
- Ogumoro: No, it was in the 1970's.
- Siemer: With Dr. Palacios?
- Ogumoro: Dr. Palacios was also there. Abel Olopai was there and I believe if I am not mistaken Luis Limes also was one of them.
- Willens: At the time that the Marianas Political Status Commission was formed in 1972, the Legislation provided that there should be one member of the Commission chosen by the Carolinian community. And there was at the time an organization called the United Carolinian Association.
- Ogumoro: The United Carolinian Association, and I think it was Felix Rabauliman.
- Willens: Yes, it was. Did he come from a particular clan?
- Ogumoro: He was also from a particular clan. Felix is not just from a particular clan. He was one of our first educated people. He was an educator at that time and the Carolinians looked to him as somebody that could represent them in this position. So he was selected.
- Willens: Was the United Carolinian Association an organization that tried to bring the clans together?
- Ogumoro: It was really not, to my understanding, the role of the United Carolinian Association to work with different clans. It was just to help the Carolinian community with political issues. I think we were more active on the political issues. But my understanding was that it was not really an organization comprised of clan members. You know like it would not be clan representatives.
- Willens: Do you have any personal recollections of Felix Rabauliman that you can share with us in terms of his views on political status?
- Ogumoro: I have always regarded Felix as a very caring person for the Carolinians. He was a quiet type. Different people have different ways of relating to us and some are very outspoken. He has a quiet way of relating, but I consider him to be a natural leader. He had the people's interest at heart. One thing that I admired whenever I worked with Felix was his ability to listen very carefully, and he takes your suggestions. I don't know how he took the other people suggestions, but he was very mindful of what I would put forth, my concerns. He would always ask about how do I feel on certain things. I was one of the younger ones. When I joined the Association, of course, we had our own different positions on different issues but we were able to work together. I considered myself one of the younger ones, the youngest member of the Association. I always remember Felix as the first leader of the United Carolinian Association. I had no difficulty working with Felix. I am not agreeing with everything that he told me, but we were able to work together for the common interest of the Carolinians. And he had the interest of the Carolinian people at heart. So

that was very important to us. Since we are on that subject, all of the Carolinians were considered to be part of that. In my second term, the election when I took a different position on casino gambling, the Party, the United Carolinian Association, I think they were involved in ousting me or sabotaging my election. That is the beginning of the split. I was the cause of the split. So we have two aghurubw now, the United Carolinian Association remains with the Republican Party and the other society, the new aghurubw that started with the Democratic Party.

Siemer: How do you spell that?

Ogumoro: Aghurubw.

Siemer: This is the group that Abel Olopai started?

Ogumoro: No. It was actually Dr. Kaipat and Herman R. Guerrero and his brother, Benjamin, and me, and all of our followers. At that time we were supposed to have a primary to determine the Carolinian candidate at the Micro Beach Pavilion, and we didn't show up. All my relatives, they are not going to show up. We are going to form our own party and that was the start of it. We named it after the paramount chief.

Siemer: This was in the 1980 campaign?

Ogumoro: The campaign for the Second Legislature.

Willens: And was it your recollection that gambling was one of the principal issues that divided the community?

Ogumoro: It was gambling. I took a different position on gambling.

Siemer: What was your position?

Ogumoro: At first when it came and it was presented to the Legislature, I voted for the bill to pass it. It was only because I was looking at the revenue side of it. After it went over, it went to the Governor. People came up to me and said, "Felicidad, can you please reconsider because I hope you were really thinking of the social impact this would have on the community."

Siemer: This is poker parlors and pachinko and things like that?

Ogumoro: Anything that has to do with gambling. So I reconsidered, and I changed my vote when it came back for us for override, because Carlos vetoed it.

Siemer: It was passed by the Legislature and it was vetoed by Camacho.

Ogumoro: And so I did not help with the override.

Siemer: And what happened?

Ogumoro: So the Aghurubw, they moved to exclude me and to sabotage my election.

Siemer: In the next election, they were opposed to you being a candidate?

Ogumoro: I ran under the banner of the Democratic Party for the second term.

Willens: That would be 1979.

Ogumoro: Yes, in 1979.

Willens: In 1979, as I understand it, the lower House switched from Territorial or Republican control to Democratic control. During the first term of Carlos Camacho, the Legislature was totally Republican in both Houses.

Ogumoro: That is right.

- Willens: But the lower House changed from Republican to Democratic in the second Legislature. What do you recall being the issues that brought more Democrats into the lower House in 1979?
- Ogumoro: I think one of them would have been gambling.
- Willens: So there was strong public support on Saipan against gambling?
- Ogumoro: Remember the Citizens United Against Casino Gambling? They were very active at that time. From my recollection, some key people that were part of the Democratic Party were very active in going against casino gambling. So I would say that was one of the issues.
- Siemer: In 1979 you ran as a Democrat and won?
- Ogumoro: In 1979, yes, I won.
- Willens: Then what happened in 1981?
- Ogumoro: I ran again, and I lost.
- Willens: And that is when Governor Tenorio came in.
- Ogumoro: Remember, there was a split. Two candidates wanted to run for governor, Herman Guerrero and Carlos Camacho.
- Willens: Whom did you support?
- Ogumoro: I really supported Herman R.
- Siemer: That was the year there was a primary. That's why your committee [the Democratic Central Committee] now opposes a primary, right?
- Ogumoro: Yes. Herman is very, very aware of what happened. It was because of that split that brought the downfall. It was the landslide defeat for the Democrats.
- Willens: Let me see if I understand this. Was there in fact a primary between Carlos Camacho and Herman Guerrero?
- Ogumoro: I think there was.
- Willens: And Herman Guerrero won that primary. But Carlos ran anyway, isn't that correct?
- Ogumoro: I think so.
- Willens: In fact there were two Democratic candidates and one Republican candidate?
- Ogumoro: Yes, I think that is my recollection of it. But probably if you had interviewed H.R. Guerrero he would have been more aware of what actually went on. Just to further clarify that point.
- Siemer: You are the Executive Secretary of the Democratic Committee now?
- Ogumoro: I am one of the officers of the Democratic Committee.
- Siemer: And that was an issue now, just for the record, whether there should be a Democratic primary and the Committee decided there should not?
- Ogumoro: In the interest of the Party, so that we can win and win big.
- Willens: When you came back to Saipan in 1973, did you become aware then of the political status negotiations that were going on?
- Ogumoro: Oh, yes. I think before that time we formed what we called the Saipan Women's

Association. It was just a group of women college graduates that got together to be involved on the issues that affect us. At that time it was our political status.

Siemer: When was that group formed?

Ogumoro: Shortly after I got back. That was maybe about 1974.

Siemer: Who were some of the women who were members back then?

Ogumoro: I remember Agnes McPhetres, Josephine Sablan, Bernie Mitchell (Ted Mitchell's late wife), Kathleen Seman, my sister who is not very well right now (she was a very intelligent woman). So there a few of us who were already there together.

Willens: Was that organization separate from the political parties?

Ogumoro: Yes.

Willens: Did it include both Republicans and Democrats?

Ogumoro: All the women that wanted to be part of the organization. We got together, and we were involved in different things, in educational issues. We just got together at a time that our political status was on the table. It was a big issue for us, so we took it. So at that time the organization started to be very involved with the political education process in the sense that we were attending meetings, and meeting with the Political Status Commission. We were able to be there to express our views. Also, we met with the Political Status Commission ourselves, and we had some very, very interesting experiences.

Willens: Was the Political Status Commission open to you as an organization to discuss what it was pursuing?

Ogumoro: Oh, yes definitely. I think it was more of expressing our concerns to them and asking them questions on the various points. I know the women were very keen and perhaps some of us should have been sitting on the Political Status Commission.

Willens: What were your principal concerns that you communicated about with the Commission?

Ogumoro: Well, one of them was Article I, the provision of the Covenant that talks about our political relationship. We wanted to know what that was, the impact of the Commonwealth status. What would change mean for the Marianas? We were also concerned about our being able to take control. Are we ready? The question of whether we were ready. If we entered that relationship would we be overrun by more qualified people, and how are we going to deal with that? There was a concern about our lands. Of course, that was a big asset to be worried about. What was going to happen to our lands? Both Chamorros and Carolinians were very concerned about our ability to hold on to our lands.

Siemer: What was the "are we ready" issue? What were people feeling on the subject of not being ready for this new status?

Ogumoro: I think they were thinking more of the jobs. Are we ready to compete for jobs? And are we ready educationally? Are we educationally ready to take control of these positions and able to compete with just anybody that comes in, because in employment, we were just starting. I guess at that time we were not really thinking of Filipinos coming in to take over. I probably thought about Americans coming in, that they were more qualified than us and more educated than us. In terms of numbers, there were a lot of them able to come over and teach in our schools and able to take those positions [that local people were holding].

- Siemer: So you were concerned about the number of college graduates that you had?
- Ogumoro: At that time, I don't think we were talking about Filipinos.
- Willens: Did you have any concern as a group as to whether the local citizens were ready to exercise the responsibilities of self-government?
- Ogumoro: Oh, yes. I am glad you brought that point up. I think that is a concern. Also, I raised that concern about the property issue. Why are we going to be under the sovereignty of the United States? Go all the way back to when they created the Marianas Political Status Commission. My question was why did they, back then, only look at the Commonwealth status and not at other statuses? You know, what are the other forms of relationships that we could have with the United States? Why not the free association status? Why were they so gung ho on this one?
- Willens: You were wondering why the Commission was directed to look only at a some kind of a permanent relationship under U.S. sovereignty and did not have the freedom to look at free association?
- Ogumoro: Oh, yes. And it is not just the women members. It is also my recollection that some of the members of other groups were also raising concerns. Like the group that Oscar Rasa had. I was also part of them. I was kind restricting myself, in talking right now, to the Women's Association. But some of those views are shared by others in the community. The Carolinians were also raising questions. A lot of them were raising questions about that Covenant.
- Siemer: Did the Women's Association keep any records back then? Did they have minutes or anything like that?
- Ogumoro: If we have, we have to go back and dig and we could provide them as records for you. I could contact Sam McPhetres because many of the meetings that we had, Sam was also with us. He was married to Agnes at the time. Actually I considered and I still consider Sam as a very dear friend. Also like a father. We turned to him for guidance. He was with the Peace Corps at first and then he started to work with the Trust Territory government. He was a personality that was always around for us to bounce our ideas back and forth. He was also sharing what he could share about the concerns that we had.
- Willens: Were you aware at the time that the Marianas political leaders both within the Popular Party and the Territorial Party for 15 or 20 years had been petitioning to establish a close and permanent relationship with the U.S.?
- Ogumoro: I do not know. I am not aware that they wanted that. Maybe that would answer the question why they were pushing for just that and not something else.
- Willens: Were you off the island in 1969 when there was plebiscite held both on Guam and the Northern Marianas about reunification?
- Ogumoro: I think I was off-island at that time. Why Guam turned down reunification, I really don't know. But if I have to speak on behalf of the Carolinians, I think the Carolinians will take that route.
- Willens: Was there a sentiment in the Carolinian community that if at all possible they would like to remain united with the Caroline Islands and the rest of Micronesia?
- Ogumoro: That is true. If you were to propose that question to them at that time, they would rather do that than to reunite with Guam. Culturally I can see why they would want to unite with the other entities more than with Guam. So back to our question, why that particular

status? That was really something that disturbs me. That it was mandated, they were to go out to do everything possible to convince the people about this one political status.

Siemer: What explanation did you get from the Commission members when you met with them?

Ogumoro: Actually we really debated that. The Commission said, "Oh, that is our mandate." I guess if they had dwelled on it a little bit more, we would have found out the real reason. Anyway going back to something that I must make sure I put on record because it does affect the way I think all the way up until now. And that is the mission—and the more that I go through the years it becomes more clear in my mind—my mission of making sure that the destiny of these islands remains in the hands of Chamorros and Carolinians. This is something that I take very seriously. And whether or not that is going to continue to happen, it is a big question mark right now. If we aren't careful, we could lose that very easily. The poor Carolinians, they are going to outnumbered. The birth rate for the Carolinians, we are moving so slowly and I don't why. Somebody said the other day maybe we are drinking too much.

Siemer: Are there about 2,500 Carolinians now?

Ogumoro: The actual count is never really coming to me and I have to rely on the Carolinian Affairs Office for that figure. The census looks like it is a very frightening figure, if we only have that number of Carolinians here. It is a very big concern. Going back to sovereignty issue again, as I see it, when you talk about sovereignty, somebody else is dictating the destiny of this island. Let's say that perhaps we really didn't have a choice but to accept the Commonwealth status. Perhaps one real reason why we went ahead and accepted it is because we really were so economically dependent on the United States. We really didn't have a choice. Maybe because we were so economically dependent, we cannot really be out there to ask a little more and push a little bit more for something that really would be leading us to have our political independence. I guess the two are sort of related and I still maintain that unless we are economically independent, that political independence is going to be hard to get. Independence is still really shaky, it's really not going to be all there. I may be wrong, but we need to work on that. We really need to work on becoming economically independent. If I look at this present Administration and it continues to go as it is going and I brag about it because I am a Democrat we are doing that. Sometimes you don't like the style of the person, but he is heading our government in the right direction. I think maybe it is important that we go slowly and continue with that route to get economic independence. But getting back to that question whether, let's say we become economically independent so that we could go back to the United States and say, "Can we sever the relationship?" or "Can we discontinue the relationship under the Covenant and do something else?" I don't know, I think it is something very difficult to get out.

Siemer: Back at that time, when you were discussing the status issue, what were the benefits that you saw of a different status?

Ogumoro: Well, at that time I was not really convinced that we needed to get out of the [current] relationship. Maybe we need to just continue to maintain what we had, and work towards improving those areas that we needed to deal with. Maybe I was wrong. Maybe we would never reach where we are at this point if we had continued on. I was not convinced that was the route to take at that time. Let's say we were pursuing a different relationship, I would like a relationship that would give us equal footing. You know like a relationship that would not tie us in and make it difficult to be part of something else. I guess the

overriding concern was that Article 1. It is very clear when [our] law conflicts with the law of the United States, what takes precedence will be the applicable U.S. law. I have trouble with that. I would rather see these islands helped to come to a point where they could take over and just run their own affairs than to have to be part of any political family, whether it is for the United States or any country.

Willens: Did you personally have any sense that United States citizenship was a desired objective?

Ogunoro: Actually at that time it was unimportant for us, at least to me. I said, "Well all right I have that option when the time comes." I discussed this with my husband. When the time comes for us to declare what citizenship we take, I would just declare to be a national, being a national of the United States if that is the only option. So he said, "Are you sure? Think about it very carefully because you are going to have a hard time traveling back and forth." So that is why I have to have that citizenship.

Siemer: So you elected U.S. citizenship?

Ogunoro: When it came to having to go process a passport, I really had a hard time and he said, "Well, I am going to send it in so that you are processed and you can decide later on what you are going to do with it." But no, to tell you the truth the Carolinians' most important questions are what is that relationship going to do with our land, our children. If it's not going to hamper their education, why get into it? I guess probably and coming back again I think it was so disastrous for me. I think the overriding reason why they voted for that Covenant and it was used during the campaign somebody has to got to pay for it. They would talk about it during the campaigning for people to approve the Covenant the money.

Siemer: What do you mean when you say the money?

Ogunoro: You are going to have a lot of money coming in to the Commonwealth if we enter this relationship.

Siemer: Was it government money that people were talking about or private investments?

Ogunoro: I don't think they were looking at the private investment. They were looking for what government funding was going to be guaranteed. That seven year Covenant funding. It was explained to the people that this would be available. That was what we were going to get under the Covenant, and they were making sure that the people understood that. One real disappointment I think I will never forget is when we asked that question, "Why was there very limited political education?" "Why are we rushing this?" For most people, it still hasn't sunk in yet. It takes a lot of time. We still have a lot of things that we needed to have answered. We haven't understood these things, surprisingly even up until now. We disagree among ourselves on some of the provisions. We said, "Can you go slowly? Why are you rushing this? This is a very difficult thing to understand." They said, "Well, we have a time line to follow. This is what we decided we are going to do. Come this day, we are going to have an election." The sad thing about it is that a large percent of those people that voted for that, for the passage of it [the Covenant] during the plebiscite, didn't understand what they were voting for.

Siemer: How long do you think it would have taken for an education campaign that would really sunk in?

Ogunoro: I don't know. First, we must understand what we were voting for. Second, I think that maybe part of the strategy was don't spend too long on it because the more they become aware the more it is going to get very complicated. And it was in my mind if more time were available, more people were able to become aware of what it is that they were getting

- into. I think if it would have been delayed a little bit more, I don't know if we would have voted for it. For the Carolinians, that section on the land alienation provision, it was a very critical section.
- Siemer: Setting the status issue aside for the moment, were the Carolinians satisfied with the land alienation arrangement?
- Ogumoro: Satisfied?
- Siemer: That land could not be sold to outsiders.
- Ogumoro: We were making sure that was the case, that their land would not be gone.
- Siemer: Were people concerned back at that time about whether the United States would accept that kind of limitation that would keep stateside United States citizens from buying land here?
- Ogumoro: You mean the Carolinians? I really understand that. Were they concerned about how the United States was going to be taking that permission?
- Siemer: Yes, it was a very tough provision. It was something that never had been done before bringing a territory into the United States. Were they satisfied that the land alienation was a good idea?
- Ogumoro: According to how it was explained to us. I think one of the things that was used in explaining that was this is a special relationship. This was a unique relationship and, according to the explanation that was given to them, that could be done. They were convinced at that time that as long as that provision was there to protect to their land, that they would vote for it. But remember that was just an answer to that concern, but they didn't vote on it.
- Willens: Did the Carolinian Association give any instructions to Felix as to whether he should sign the Covenant?
- Ogumoro: You know I can't really answer that. There were some minutes to that effect, that we directed Felix. But I know for sure that Felix knew where the Carolinians were coming from, that they were concerned about this document over here. Felix would have acted out of the concern that he was receiving from the Carolinians. I am sure that he felt comfortable with it [his position]. I am sure that there were the public meetings held to make sure that he did not sign that document. He and Oscar Rasa were the only ones that ended up not signing the document of all the Status Commission members. If he was not representing the true position of the Carolinians, he would have gotten the message that he didn't do the right thing, because the Carolinians would come in and tell him. They knew him. Felix, I am sure, acted having in mind what his people wanted.
- Siemer: What was Oscar Rasa's connection to the Carolinian community?
- Ogumoro: I have to say that Oscar was one of our leaders that the Carolinians looked up to. He was married to a Carolinian. Pat is part Carolinian. Her father is Carolinian.
- Siemer: But Oscar isn't Carolinian, is he?
- Ogumoro: Oscar is part Carolinian. Remember that the Carolinian Association was part of the Republican Party. So Oscar dealt very closely with them with that regard. He was representing the Carolinians because he was running from [a district including] villages having a large Carolinian segment.
- Siemer: What was the district that Oscar represented?

- Ogumoro: Oleai and Garapan. Oleai has a lot of Carolinians in it. And, of course, the Northern Islands. Those three districts are the districts that compromised Precinct No. 3. And Oscar was running from that area.
- Willens: Where did you meet your husband?
- Ogumoro: I met him at the Younis's house.
- Willens: Was this after you came back?
- Ogumoro: Paz [Younis] and I were very good friends. We are still best friends today. It was on one of the anniversaries of the Marianas that he took notice of me. He was one of the East-West Center scholarship recipients.
- Siemer: What year was he at the East-West Center?
- Ogumoro: I think he was there between 1964 and 1969 and then he went back to Palau to work before he came to Saipan.
- Willens: When do you recall that he came to Saipan?
- Ogumoro: I think he came in the mid-1970's to work for Chase Manhattan.
- Willens: Was he one of the founders of the Young Micronesian publication?
- Ogumoro: He was a writer.
- Willens: He was the writer, publisher, editor and the marketer.
- Ogumoro: Yes. He was also the one that wrote on the Solomon Report.
- Willens: Did you personally ever see sections of the Solomon Report?
- Ogumoro: In fact I just asked for a copy of that because my son, when he came back during his Christmas break, he said, "Can I get a copy of that Solomon Report?"
- Siemer: Did you know that there is a copy in the Commonwealth Archives?
- Ogumoro: I told him to check the Commonwealth Archives or MARC. So it's there.
- Siemer: It is included in the documents that we donated to the Archives.
- Ogumoro: My understanding is that document is taken by somebody and sent over to him [Cisco Uludong] when he was still with that publication.
- Willens: Did he ever tell you where he got the copies?
- Ogumoro: No, he didn't.
- Siemer: But it was from here though?
- Ogumoro: Yes, it was from here.
- Willens: Somebody from here sent it to him and not somebody back in Washington?
- Ogumoro: It was from here.
- Willens: When Francisco came to Saipan, did he play a role with respect to the plebiscite on the Covenant? Did he come in time to participate in that?
- Ogumoro: He came after [the plebiscite]. We got married in 1976. It had to be after because I remember that I was still very single. I got so sick when we heard that it passed 78% to 22%. We were monitoring. We were listening as the results were coming out. I was across from the road leading into the Marianas Variety from the main highway. There use to be

- a building there. I think we were around that area when we got the results. It had to be after.
- Willens: Do you remember any discussion about the way in which the question was put on ballot?
- Ogumoro: I brought that thing up. I asked Neiman Craley how come the language of this ballot was worded the way it was worded. If you vote “No,” then you will stay with the rest of the TT. And you know, at that time, the Chamorros didn’t want to stay with the rest of the TT. I don’t mean to sound racist, but I think it probably was a way to make sure people voted “Yes.” It created more confusion in the minds, especially of those who were not for the Covenant. They said if you vote “No” and you stay with the rest of the TT, you are going to be staying in thatched huts. You know that concept there of we want something better than living in thatched huts. So it was working, and I think it was a strategy.
- Siemer: When the ballot came out, a group of Carolinians went to the Micronesian Legal Services to find out if they had a way of challenging the wording in the ballot and getting it changed. Did you know about that effort?
- Ogumoro: Yes.
- Siemer: Who was the person that headed that effort?
- Ogumoro: I can’t remember now. I don’t recall that I was part of that group that went in but I do know that was pursued.
- Siemer: The Carolinians circulated a petition to get signatures about the ballot language and four or five hundred signatures were collected. Were you part of that effort to get signatures on the petition?
- Ogumoro: I doubt if I was part of that. But I know that we did work to try to change it because that was a big concern.
- Siemer: After the petition was sent to the Secretary of the Interior, the Carolinians apparently made a decision not to start a lawsuit to stop the plebiscite. Do you recall why the decision was made not to pursue the lawsuit?
- Ogumoro: You know, in that regard I cannot really help you. You may have to talk to somebody else. But I do know though that it was a very big concern. At this point for some reason I cannot remember the details of why we did not pursue it.
- Siemer: When Erwin Canham came out here as the Plebiscite Commissioner, did the women’s group meet with him?
- Ogumoro: Maybe not as a group, but we were asked to be part of an Advisory Group.
- Siemer: What was your impression of the way that Canham went about his duties with respect to the plebiscite?
- Ogumoro: I think he handled it very fairly. I know he worked well with the people, and if he did not I would recall that. From my point of view, he handled it fairly and he tried to work with the group that was working with him to make sure that things ran smoothly.
- Siemer: He formed an Advisory Commission?
- Ogumoro: That is my understanding. The Commission was to play that role to advise him so it would expedite and make things easier.

Siemer: What other efforts did he make to understand the Carolinians' point of view with respect to the plebiscite?

Ogumoro: You know for some reason I don't really remember that there was anything specific other than the role that the Political Status Commission itself played. They were the ones that came out to meet in terms of what was going to be presented at the plebiscite. But I do not remember that Erwin had anything to do other than to be meeting with the different groups. I would not be surprised if somebody from the Carolinian group was on his Commission to make sure that the Carolinians' point of view, concerns and needs were also presented. But I just can't recall who it was.

Siemer: When Canham published his list of registered voters, there were a number of groups that examined that list to see if they thought there was anybody on the list who shouldn't be on the list. Did the Carolinians make any efforts to challenge people who had registered?

Ogumoro: If I that was done, I don't remember it. It could have been done, but I don't remember that it was done.

Siemer: What was your own view about what the outcome would be?

Ogumoro: Actually I felt that it was a difficult battle, but I did not expect that it was going to be such a huge majority in favor of the Covenant. I knew that it was a hard battle. We had to work hard; we didn't have money. If I remember, the money given for this effort was only the \$10,000 that was appropriated by the Congress of Micronesia and it was turned over to the group that Oscar headed. That was the only money that I am aware of. What can you do with \$10,000?

Siemer: Did you expect a big voter turn out?

Ogumoro: For that election, yes, I did. I mean, I expected the [overall] result, but the actual [number of] "no" and the "yes" were sickening. That's why I guess I got literally sick because it was a big surprise.

Willens: In November of 1974 just as the negotiations were reaching their final stages, there was an election for the Congress of Micronesia. Oscar Rasa and Pete A. Tenorio succeeded Ed Pangelinan and Herman Q. Guerrero for positions in the Congress. Do you recall whether political status was an important issue in that campaign?

Ogumoro: I am sure that the political status was a factor in the result of that election.

Willens: Some of the campaigning was to the effect that the Territorial Party candidates thought that the negotiations were proceeding too rapidly and that more time should be taken before reaching agreement. Was that your group's position at the time?

Ogumoro: Yes.

Willens: In January of 1975, during a recess between negotiating sessions, the Rota Municipal Council supported by Tinian made a request that the Covenant be changed to provide that a bicameral legislature be required of the future Commonwealth government and that the three islands have equal representation in the Senate. Did you have any position at the time as to whether a bicameral legislature was a good idea?

Ogumoro: Well, at that time I guess I would have just looked at it as fair representation for the three islands. I guess if I looked at it now it would be a different position. But there were things also that Rota and Tinian would have been expected to deliver and without consenting to that request it would have probably been difficult for us. So, I think at that time we were really not thinking down the road that was going to make it more difficult for the

bureaucracy to operate. I think maybe we were thinking more of getting our people represented. Having a bicameral legislature would make it possible for the three islands to work together. One house having equal representation and the other house by the number of the people on the island. At that time I really felt that it was to the best interest of three islands to have a bicameral legislature, but if I look back now I would go for a unicameral legislature. Whether that is going to be possible, I don't know. I do know that they [Rota and Tinian] would put up a lot of opposition if you were going to go in that direction.

Willens: Were any members of your Women's Association strongly pro-Covenant or were all of them opposed to the Covenant?

Ogumoro: I think the Women's Association was there to raise the issues for the people think about before they go to the polls. I think they were more in a position to vote against. Many unanswered questions were being raised, and I began to raise other questions so they were beginning to see that there were difficulties and that they needed more time. Also just that thing of going through with the plebiscite when you knew that there are things that still have to be addressed. So it is a very big concern in itself. It didn't sit well at least for the majority of the members. I think the Women's Association went out against that package.

Willens: Do you have any recollection of hearing that the Commission now was reaching its final decision point?

Ogumoro: You know I don't where I was at that time. I am sure I was not off-island, but I do not remember that I was actually present.

Willens: The Commission was meeting in the Municipal Council building down by the Post Office.

Ogumoro: Is that where they met?

Willens: That is where the Commission met and the second floor has a veranda. One night when the Commission was about to vote, all of a sudden some figures in black appeared out on the veranda. It was suggested that these were women who were aware that there was going to be a vote and were there to make sure the men did the right thing.

Ogumoro: I do not remember that.

Willens: On the night before the Covenant was to be signed, Joe Mafnas filed a lawsuit to enjoin the signing of the Covenant by the members of the Marianas Political Status Commission. Did you know why he filed that lawsuit?

Ogumoro: I don't remember that.

Willens: Did you ever discuss with Mr. Mafnas or Oscar Rasa why that lawsuit had to be filed?

Ogumoro: I don't recall that.

Willens: You mentioned that in middle 1970's you were working for the Director of Personnel?

Ogumoro: Yes.

Willens: What was his name again?

Ogumoro: Richard Kanost.

Willens: Is he still in Pohnpei?

Ogumoro: He has gone back to the United States. I don't know if he is still alive.

Willens: Did you continue working in the TTPI government then up until you ran for office?

- Ogumoro: That is right.
- Willens: Did you have any sense at the time as to whether the people that went into the Legislature and also went into the Executive Branch were prepared to administer the Commonwealth?
- Ogumoro: The people down below who are part of the bureaucracy were not prepared. I think that in the Legislature, they were prepared.
- Siemer: From your own view, were the people ready to take on the responsibilities of the government?
- Ogumoro: The ones that were appointed to cabinet positions were. I am talking probably the ones down below. But the ones for the key positions, I do not remember any instance where somebody was placed in a position that he was not ready to assume. There may have been a question raised about their performance when they actually took over. That is always something that people will talk about when it comes to any appointees. I think overall the ones that were placed in charge did well. Some of the first ones that came into mind—heading the Department of Commerce and Labor was Joe Ayuyu. Joe just came back also at that time. Maria Pangelinan was also was one of the first ones that took over. I think she was in the Finance Department. There were others. But I think they were prepared in the sense that I didn't have any particular doubts that they could handle the job. But in my case, my situation when I said, "Were we prepared?" meaning to compete with others that were coming. Like for instance, I wasn't thinking of the Filipinos coming in like now but people coming from the States.
- Siemer: During the campaign on the plebiscite that was one of the points that Oscar Rasa raised repeatedly, particularly with respect to teachers. He said that this new status would open up competition and that people would come in from the States and possibly take their jobs.
- Ogumoro: That was a concern.
- Siemer: But after the status was established and you all in the Legislature were elected, that didn't happen?
- Ogumoro: No. We weren't seeing a flock of them coming in and displacing our people or the jobs that they were occupying. No, that didn't happen.
- Siemer: Back when Oscar was articulating his opposition to the Covenant, he put together a list of points that he thought should be renegotiated. Do you recall that?
- Ogumoro: I recall that there was a list. I do not know if it became public record and if that was ever transmitted.
- Siemer: Actually Oscar published it in a big ad in the *Variety* where he put down all of his points. My question was what your sense was at the time about the practicality of going back and opening up the negotiations again. Did you think that would work?
- Ogumoro: To go back in the sense that we were going to address, go back and start all over again? Maybe I would not go back and start all over again. I don't think I would go back in the sense of doing the same thing that we did at that time. During the latter part of last year when they were really questioning our ability to control our own immigration, you know at the Congressional hearing that made us look like we really cannot handle our own internal affairs. At that time I really thought about going in the direction of severing the relationship. So for me to have to go back, I won't do the same thing. I don't think I would do that.

- Siemer: Not go back and renegotiate those points that Oscar wanted.
- Ogumoro: No.
- Siemer: If you went back, it would be for a different status?
- Ogumoro: If we are ready to be on our own, then let's just work together, you know work with the United States, but not continue with the relationship—that would be the direction I would go. Not to continue the relationship. We learned a great deal during this time that we have been together, you have taught a lot of things, but for me I would rather take independence and maintain a good working relationship together.
- Siemer: Back in those days, up until 1975, had you traveled much in the rest of Micronesia?
- Ogumoro: When I was a training coordinator I was able to travel and see the other entities.
- Siemer: So you had been to Chuuk and Pohnpei?
- Ogumoro: To all entities except Yap. I didn't see much of Yap except what I see at the airport when you transit. Pohnpei and Chuuk, those were the other entities that I was able to travel to.
- Siemer: Based on that experience, what was your view then about the likelihood that Saipan, Rota and Tinian could unite with the rest of Micronesia as one entity?
- Ogumoro: Now?
- Siemer: Back then.
- Ogumoro: Oh, back then. I think it was something that I could look to, but now I would rather maintain the Northern Marianas together and work with these entities.
- Siemer: Separate from the rest of Micronesia.
- Ogumoro: Separate. Let the different entities continue on from where they are now, and we will work together on an cooperative basis.
- Siemer: After the plebiscite was over, the Covenant was sent to the United States for approval by the Congress. Back then, did the Carolinians have any view that the Congress might reject the Covenant?
- Ogumoro: No. I think they thought that it was going to be much better. I know that we were strategically important militarily. But maybe we should have taken a little more time to think over the things that we negotiated and not to rush. This is my opinion again, because right now, the United States doesn't need anything from us. We really have to face this reality. In fact, I thought about that when they said, "They were really pushing us to the Covenant; they would do that because of what they need from us the significance of the Northern Marianas."
- Willens: The United States interest included a desire to get some kind of a firm claim and most of the island of Tinian for military purposes. And that as you may recall was part of the negotiations that led to the Covenant. Did you have any views at the time as to whether letting the United States lease two-thirds of the island of Tinian was a good idea?
- Ogumoro: Well, at that time you know we thought that it was. In fact, I didn't really see why they had to go into that arrangement, but they did. I think the concern we had was the amount of money under the lease agreement. How much per square meter?
- Willens: The Covenant provided for about \$20 million included that inflation protection.

- Ogumoro: Yes, I can never get that figure straight. But I just thought that we gave that piece of land or the pieces that they gave for military purposes at a very, very cheap rate. For a businessman, if you are going to go lease a prime property off the beach, some of them are going very, very high now. A hundred dollars is peanuts. I am surprised even what is really inland at the time they did the appraisal it was going at about \$180 something.
- Willens: Did you have any friends on Tinian at this time?
- Ogumoro: I really didn't know Florine until later, but she is the only one that I am close to. But at the time we really didn't talk, in her group.
- Siemer: After the Covenant was sent to Washington, the District Legislature began considering how to set up the Constitutional Convention and there were a number of bills that were introduced. Did you or your women's group lobby the Legislature at all with respect to those bills?
- Ogumoro: I don't remember specifically that the women's organization came in.
- Siemer: There was a concern at the time about whether Carolinians would be elected to the Constitutional Convention if the election was held on an island-wide basis instead of district-by-district.
- Ogumoro: Yes, we did discuss that. In fact, I was alluding to that when I said that there was a primary. I knew that was a concern because we [Carolinians] were fewer. We would not have a chance to get people in, so that concern was raised whether we could have a primary just among the Carolinians. [We wanted] a provision that would insure and guarantee that there are Carolinian candidates because we were afraid of not being able to get our candidates [elected].
- Siemer: Do you recall how the Carolinian candidates who ran in that [Con-Con] election were selected?
- Ogumoro: Yes, we used to have a primary. And the primaries were conducted at Micro Beach. The Carolinians would come and they would vote. I don't remember if there were three, I think there were three.
- Siemer: There were three who were elected, that's right.
- Ogumoro: But that is not practice anymore. We had a second primary that I remember. That was the one that I did not attend. And they chose their candidates in that primary and left me out because I didn't go. The only thing that I recall [about the Con-Con] and I still remember a very serious concern that if we do not do it that way we would not be guaranteed at all. We would have no Carolinians in the Legislature, because we were going to be outnumbered by the Chamorros. I guess by that very action we are saying we aren't sure whether the Chamorros are going to vote for the Carolinians. So we were just making sure, just to guarantee the Carolinians did have some representatives in the Legislature. That is why we had to go that route.
- Siemer: You had Ben Fitial, Pete Igitol, and Luis Limes who were elected. When the Constitutional Convention was going on did those delegates talk to the Carolinian community explaining what issues were being discussed and what they were doing?
- Ogumoro: I recall that there were meetings with the delegates. Yes, there was communication between our delegates and us.
- Siemer: Did you attend any of the Con-Con sessions?

- Ogumoro: Yes, I remember that I attended some of the sessions. I didn't sit in on a majority of them, but I know I would go out and sit in on some of the sessions, especially those that were very pertinent to Carolinians. There were not too many public hearings, though. I guess that they were also very busy with the paperwork that they had to do. I do not recall that there were village meetings that they would normally conduct after they had gone over some of the very critical ones.
- Siemer: In the middle of the Constitutional Convention after a draft of all the Articles had been considered by the delegates and voted on, there was a recess and public hearings were held. Shortly after the Constitutional Convention reconvened, they were presented with a letter from you demanding a better deal for the Carolinians. Do you recall writing that letter?
- Ogumoro: Yes.
- Siemer: Tell us what the background of the letter was. Why did you think it was necessary to write a letter?
- Ogumoro: This will be leading up to the Carolinian Affairs Office.
- Siemer: Yes, exactly.
- Ogumoro: I was so sure that we needed to do something. I guess when I was away I never felt that there was discrimination, that I was discriminated against. I never felt that. But when I was away [in the States] I had the feeling that something should to be done [to protect Carolinians]. This has to do with Ben Santos, the Chairman of the District Legislature. Mr. Santos is a very dear friend of mine. That was the first time that I felt that there was not just pressure, it was discrimination. There was a newspaper article that covered what they [the Legislature] were dealing with at the time. Right now I just cannot pinpoint it. It kind of sounded like he was down on the Carolinians. So that began that feeling of something must be done. When I came back, and I started to work for awhile, I started to be with the United Carolinian Association. That's when I felt that we had to put something in [the Constitution] just for protection. I know that the Chamorros would see that as unnecessary. But we had to have that office. I am sorry but just based on my past experience, abolishing that office would be a great mistake. Because nobody going to come out and talk. Even in meetings that I attend and these are very well-intentioned people, you cannot help but sense that feeling that there is no problem with Carolinians. And the Carolinians have problems as a people that you need to take care of. And it's easy to just overlook it. So you need a office that would act as an advocate for that small group. I guess that something of a conviction that I had. That needs to be down in writing. I was kind of faulted for not thinking of the issue on Managaha at some point.
- Siemer: What issue is that?
- Ogumoro: About why Managaha should be preserved. The Paramount Chief is buried there. And even though Ben Fitial was there [in the Con-Con], Luis Limes was there, Pete Igitol was there; these guys failed to mention that. If you read the Constitution provision that has to do with Managaha, nothing specifically says that [it is preserved] because the Paramount Chief was buried there. It should be preserved and respected as a special place. And why was it so difficult for us to have that language put in. Maybe if it had been addressed from the very beginning, we would not have this tension. Remember that I mentioned very early on conversation that we are beginning to go back to our roots precisely because of that. I think now we are asserting this thing of the Paramount Chief being buried at Managaha.
- Siemer: The Carolinians have ceremonies every year to mark that?

- Ogumoro: Yes. There is tension among them, the clans right now, especially in the wake of this assertion. The celebration and all these activities is beginning to stir these clans. This is a wonderful thing that is happening now. Now people are meeting to find out what clan they belong to.
- Siemer: Back then, before you wrote that letter, had you meant with Ben, Luis Limas and Pete Igitol to explain what you wanted?
- Ogumoro: There were meetings that we had. I don't remember meeting with Pete Igitol, but Luis Limes.
- Siemer: Why did you think it was necessary to write a letter to the Convention as opposed to just getting your Carolinian delegates to do something?
- Ogumoro: Well, I think I believed in putting it in writing so if they don't act on it at least there was something already down in writing. There were things that we had talked about, and I am sure that those issues should have also been put on record just so that if they didn't act on it at least there was something that says we did touch on it.
- Siemer: Did you have in mind what became the Office of the Carolinian Affairs?
- Ogumoro: I think that was primarily the issue. Because we did meet, the United Carolinian Association did meet and, of course, there are no minutes to that effect. But we did meet and discuss that there is that need for it. There were also other things.
- Siemer: Do you remember any of the other things, other than the Office of Carolinian Affairs?
- Ogumoro: Well, I think if I am not mistaken one of the things that we also talked about was how can we maybe get the top offices.
- Siemer: How you can get Carolinian representation in the top offices?
- Ogumoro: If I am not mistaken, it was maybe not the Governor, but we were trying to see. At that time there were all kinds of possibilities that we were looking at and that was our chance. I think Luis Limas would have a very good recollection and Abel Olopai, he was my uncle. I am sorry that he is not with us anymore because he would have a lot of things to share with you. He was very keen on some of those concerns.
- Siemer: We did interview Luis and Ben, and both of them remember your requests, that you were very thorough and very insistent that they act and that they get up and make speeches. Then you came to the sessions and asked them why they weren't making more speeches.
- Ogumoro: Well I know that Ben is a very good speaker. I think they did very well, but I think we could have probably put together more for the Carolinians than just the Carolinian Affairs office. I think up to this date some Carolinians think that having the Carolinian Affairs Office is kind of making that discrimination, like pointing it out, making it more obvious, that the Carolinian office should not even be there because it only perpetuated [discrimination]. I don't think so. I think it should be there. When we finally had the [Con-Con] session that dealt with the final proposal, I was there to see what was going on. I felt that at that point the Chamorro delegates could kill it if they really want to. They have more votes. But I don't think anybody wanted to touch that.
- Siemer: How has the Carolinian office worked out in your view; has it done what you had envisioned back in those days?
- Ogumoro: No. I am still disappointed. I think we have a lot of power and that we could really do so much, but I think we're disadvantaged, especially when they put that office down to the [division level], they make it a part of the umbrella, the Community and Cultural Affairs

[Department]. It is very limited on them acting. That is how I see it. The office is just not performing the way I would have liked it to perform. I don't know if it is personalities in there. Because you know we are so powerful. We have a position to allocate resources. We review the budget with the Governor. I don't know why they are not taking advantage of that. We not performing and using that authority to program resources. They are the ones that review it. They could put in a lot of things if they wanted to.

Siemer: After the Constitutional Convention was finished and the Office of Carolinian Affairs was included in the Constitution, was the United Carolinian Association generally satisfied with the Constitution?

Ogumoro: Yes, I think they were.

Siemer: What about the public education program that followed the Constitutional Convention. What was your view about that, was it adequate?

Ogumoro: It was not at the same scale as the Political Status Commission's operation. It should have been more of that. But I guess at that time probably for whatever reasons perhaps there were not as many critical issues that had to be brought back. But maybe they should have.

Siemer: People were generally satisfied with the Constitution?

Ogumoro: Maybe they were not issues that really needed to be put back to the general public to get further information on. Maybe that is why they did not go back so many times. But I am so sure that there was a lot of work done.

Siemer: Did you work at all in the public education campaign?

Ogumoro: Not with the people that were working on it. I do know that I was participating in meetings that had to do with the working of the Constitution. But not with the machinery. If there were any groups that were put together primarily for this purpose of expediting or explaining, I did not [work on those].

Willens: Let me just mention some of the members of the Marianas Political Status Commission and ask you what your general impression was of them at the time. The Chairman was Ed Pangelinan. What was your impression of Mr. Pangelinan's contributions?

Ogumoro: Oh, he knew what he wanted and he went out. He was very efficient and I knew that Ed was very knowledgeable on the material that he had to present and he went out all the way to make sure that the mission was accomplished.

Siemer: Was he good at that in the public meetings?

Ogumoro: I think he came across as a very bright person that was able to present the material well to the people. I do know that he was challenged whenever he comes into women's group meetings.

Siemer: He was challenged?

Ogumoro: I know that we challenge him and I think even with difficulties, he been sitting very comfortably. He was able to take it and be very diplomatic. He doesn't lose his cool. He gets excited every now and then but he was able to stand and we can still be friends even if we disagree. Ed is very good at that.

Willens: What about Ben Santos who was Vice Chairman?

Ogumoro: I really didn't know Ben Santos at that time. I knew that I was very upset when I read that newspaper article about his response to one of the concerns by a Carolinian. The way that

he kind of treated it like, what's that? Yes, I had difficulty with him at that time, but as far as Ben Santos knowing him I think its more like the background. I didn't really see him as very persuasive. When we would come in to meet with them, he would sit there. If he had to answer, he would answer.

Willens: How about Ben Camacho?

Ogumoro: He was quiet. In fact, I hardly new him; he was a quiet person on the Commission.

Willens: How about Danny Muna? He was in the District Legislature at the time and also worked for the Saipan Municipal Council.

Ogumoro: He was quiet.

Willens: How about Ben Manglona from Rota?

Ogumoro: Oh, Benjamin! I like the guy. He was the one that was also very diplomatic and he keeps the temper down and he tries to explain. At that time I really didn't know him until we got into the Legislature. I know Ben as a very conscientious person and very caring later on. But just during the political status meetings that we had, I was impressed with Benjamin. He was able to articulate, express himself very well. Like Eddie, he finds the Women's Association very challenging. You have to be prepared to answer those concerns. But he doesn't lose his cool. He gets upset later on but at least he answered our concerns. And he was able to satisfy us, and he was able to answer what was being questioned.

Willens: How about Joe Cruz of Tinian?

Ogumoro: Oh, Joe. I didn't like Joe for some reason. Joe is a different personality, I guess. You get too irritated at times because I don't know what's in him but he is okay.

Willens: How about Pete A. Tenorio?

Ogumoro: Pete was, I guess he worked very closely with Eddie. No, it was later on I guess during the transition, during his work with the Office of Transition. He wasn't a very controversial figure. I mean he was there answering questions and discussing the facts.

Willens: Do you know if any of the work done by that Office of Transitional Studies and Planning ever was implemented by the new Commonwealth government?

Ogumoro: You know that is a very good question because there was one [study] on the social and economic [problems]. I think they were there as reference materials. But whether they were really implementing them I am sure that the studies pointed out a lot of things that we needed to be looking at. But whether they were used is another matter. I am sure that we resorted to them for reference materials, but I don't know if we were following them very closely.

Siemer: Back when you were questioning the members of the Commission, were you concerned that the people on the Commission were outmatched by the United States?

Ogumoro: Maybe if it was a concern, it wasn't really coming forth as a big concern. Maybe we were saying that in a sense. Like maybe they really were not negotiating the items that were affecting us. I guess we were questioning.

Siemer: Were people back then concerned because the Commission was represented by a lawyer from the United States?

Ogumoro: Well, at some point I remember that was a concern that was raised. Here we are negotiating with the United States and having U.S. lawyers. That was a concern.

Siemer: How did the Commission members respond to that concern?

Ogumoro: I don't think it was really addressed publicly. You know, "Why are they using U.S. attorneys or U.S. lawyers to represent us in this negotiation with the United States?" But it was something to think about. We probably should have asked them, but at that time we didn't.

Willens: Well, that is the end of our questions. Thank you very much for all your time. We would both like to thank you very much for participating in this project.

Ogumoro: I thank you both, and if there is anything else that you need and would like for me to further clarify or expand a little bit more, please feel free. I am willing to help out on this project any time.