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NORTHERN MARIANAS COLLEGE

INTERVIEWEE

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INTERVIEWER

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INTRODUCTION

This program derives from the Olympio T. Borja, Memorial Library, Pacific Collections and Archives, in order of us, to collect histories of the Marianas people, who had served, one way or the other, in our government system, so as in the community at large. Today, I would like to ask one of the Statesman, in the Marianas, who had served a long period of time, in our government to introduce himself and narrate to us some of his historical backgrounds.

Thank you, Mr. Rosario, I am Mr. Manuel Diaz Muna, as you know, we worked together one time, when you were one of the staff members, in the Legislature and also, I served the public, my term in the Congress is more than twenty eight years. It's so great that you have such ideas that makes it possible, to have this type of materials for the use of our children, who are coming up, so that they know the history of the Marianas. First of all, I would like to say that, in the past years, studies and education here in the Marianas, from Spanish Time, German, Japanese and the Americans have various differences and opportunities given to the Chamorros, in their schooling, in the Spanish time, German, Japanese and the Americans, but today, nowadays, the American school system is very broad and open to the children, for their learning, because of big facilities and tremendous availabilities of fundings, as provided by the administration, to ensure our children in their educational endeavor. I'll give you an example, in the Spanish time, according to the books we read, stories told by our parents and elders, education is very limited, during this time, 'cause the facilities were not enough, but they teach some basics, like how to write your name, how to read and days of school, not the same as today, as told by the elders and written in the history of the Marianas. Schools were offered on few couple days only during the Spanish time, German time and even in the Japanese time, not everyone can enroll in the schools, only selected ones, during these three nations period in the Marianas educational opportunities were very limited to us. Nowadays, in the American system, you as a student solely decide whether or not to continue on with your education, today educational opportunity is open and broad. If I were to go back to the times of our elders, in the Japanese time, they went to Japanese school and only up to third or fourth grades, they called sanengse or yonengse, they cannot go higher than this grade level, so the elders are assuming that probably the Japanese presumes that if the Chamorros got smarter or the Carolinians, it might not be, in the best interest of the Japanese, so this could be the reason of the limited educational opportunities of our people during this point, in time, unlike today in the American systems. This is the destination between the four nations, in light of educational system. I also want to note, for the record, in my opinion that during my

time, in the Japanese time, I was already enrolled in the Japanese school called Yocheng, like Kindergarten today, but unfortunately the war came and apparently, I didn't go to school. Then after the war, we were placed in Camp Susupe. for a year, two years and no school, no educational opportunities, when we were placed in Camp Susupe. Then when we were transferred from Camp Susupe to Chalan Kanoa, that's where schools were established they just put everybody together in the school regardless of their ages, later on they were classified by ages, per classroom, per school and started to spread out throughout the island. Furthermore, during my school age to my marriage time, school levels were no higher than ninth grade level, until in the year, 1960's, high school level was established, Catholic high school was established first, then later on, Public high school was also established.

Q-1. Thank You, Mr. Muna, in reference to economy, What do you see⁴ in relates to the economy of the Marianas, during the Japanese time, was the economy good, at that time or better today?

Mr. Rosario, the economy of the Japanese time, I would say was meager, the life of the people was simple, whatever you have on or in your property, your possessions, the visitors, the Japanese who came to our islands needed them all. We can either sale or lease to them, 'cause they need them. You can sell firewoods, you can gather firewoods and sell to the Japanese, the Japanese did not have lands, so the Japanese cannot get firewoods, can also make you pay, when you slaughter cow, you can give the skin and they make shoes out of it, many, we the Chamorros don't know how to make footwears, the Japanese know the mixture of the water and skin trunk of the Kamachele tree to skin off the hides of the cows, from there, they make hides, leather and from leather you can make shoes or sandals or any footwear. but during that time, economy is very limited, but for the islanders abundance is almost everywhere, on the island, there were a lot of cows, chickens, pigs, it's like you almost don't need to buy anything, at that time, because most of the people do not depend on imported goods, for example back in the German time, it usually takes three or more months, for ht ships to arrive from Germany to here, all those time, also the Japanese too, it takes months for the shipments of sugar, rice, shoyu sauce or other goods we cannot make and also had never seen, that is why, there are times when economy change, the Japanese goods and ours, our possessions, like chickens, pigs, cows, when slaughtered, we also give them some and they give us something else in return, like trading, you know, that's what happened in Japanese time. The economy is very limited, very, it's what they called hard, if you don't work, it seems like, you don't eat, but abundance exist on our island, in the sea and on the land, during that time, 'cause the population, if I am not mistaken, according to the record that I

have, in the year of 1840, the population was three hundred, twenty nine, 1840 is only 320 people on this island, so like I said, after the Spanish and the German, the population increase.

Q-2. In other subject, I want to touch about employees, Do you remember any of our people being employed by the Japanese government, when the Japanese was here?

Employment in the Japanese government was very limited, only those who worked at the Post Office, they worked as delivery man of the letters, I think there were three or four working at the Japanese Post Office. 'cause the Japanese do not know the Chamorro people, I remember two Chamorros working here. Mr. Joe Camacho, known as Josen PakPak and Mr. Betti Torres, some chamorros worked at the Post, only because they know the people, also in the Police Force, mostly Chamorros were hired, simply because they know who the people are and the Japanese do not know the Chamorro people and the Carolinian people. The Japanese specifically hired them, 'cause they can identify the local in other areas, in the Japanese government, none.

Q-3. In regards to lands, if I am not mistaken, homesteads or agricultural homestead were pretty much organized, set, in the Japanese time, according to the record in the Archive, Can you tell me some about lands ownership?

Regarding lands here, if I am not mistaken, the Japanese, when they came, they started making records of lands. surveyors were surveying the lands which they have interest on, few ownership titles were given. Kohachu company was interested to buy and or lease lands, so it brought its surveyors to survey the area. 'cause in the German time, there was no surveyors to determine the sizes or the boundaries. The German administrator, Mr. Fritz, first administrator, told my father that if he wants land, he just choose a place and clear the area, and the boundary would be as far as you can clear the area. That's German time. Then the Japanese came in to start the Kohachu company, aside from the Kohachu, there were two other companies, which came in 1914, and the business didn't go so well, let's say, it went broke, another Japanese company started in 1922-1924, and the same happened, it didn't go well. until the Kohachu came in, it was called Nanyo Kohachu, Kabusi Kaisa, it carefully studied the previous companies to avoid being broke, so the company started to lease the lands and some were sold to them. Don't forget that according to the record, the Americans after the war, declared that all Japanese who bought lands before, before March 27, 1935, either bought or leased the lands were considered valid, but if the Japanese leased the lands, from March 27, 1935, and or, either bought

or leased, the Americans did not recognize or considered valid, 'cause during this point in time, the Japanese had failed to report to the League of nation.

Q-4. Do you still remember the name of the NKK President?

The NKK all I know his name is Harui Machuwe, but they called him Machuwe Sacho, 'cause Sacho means boss or general manager, owner, Machuwe Sacho is the one who went to school in America, and was graduated in the University, in the year of 1886, and went back to Japan, and established the company, so in the year, 1923, he came to Saipan and established Kohachu, Kohachu is sugarcane company, sugar, the prime reason of the Japanese establishing sugar here was that it had prior intention, after the first war, they need the molasses to make alcohol, to make alcohol, to make powder, you know. for the ammunition that's the interest of the Japanese, that they came to Saipan and they have some sort of agreement, they have an understanding, amicable agreement, because they are on access power that time, and the German give to the Japanese, in 1914, I think it was October, the first battle ship that came over here. with the Japanese group, that was October 5, 1914, the ship came here and stayed, for about five days, I have a record I can give it to you that record. It was extracted, so that's the first Japanese came over here.

Q-5. Mr. Muna, aside from NKK, were there any other industries, like fishing industry in the Marianas, in the Japanese time?

During the Japanese time, aside from NKK there was also an establishment called Nanyo Tapioca Kaisa, this is tapioca company, they need to make starch, flour and many others from tapioca. In shipping, there was a Sambasi also known as Songose Sambasi, when the Japanese came here, they also established a fishing company, they trained the islanders and mostly the Carolinian men, since they were considered as good fishermen, that was why they were taken as fishermen of the company, in fact after the war, they were given the fishing boat and the chamorros and the carolinians managed and caught a lot of fish. unfortunately, they cannot be sold all out, 'cause the population of people at that time was not much, so the company was not successful.

Q-6. Nowadays, if I am not mistaken, here in the Marianas and even all over the world, in regards to transportation, almost every house or family has a car, so can you tell us little about your means of transportations, back in the Japanese time?

In the Japanese time, cars were rare. Mostly only those who were married to the Japanese can have car, from what I heard from our elders, that the Blanco families, the Machinaga families, the Obu families were the only families, who owned cars, in the Japanese time, 'cause they were sent to Japan and attended Mechanic school. The Japanese would not allow you to drive a car, if you do not know mechanics, unlike today even when an arm is amputated, there's automatic, just press the button and it goes. that is why, there were only few car owners. The most common transportation for the Chamorros were bull carts, there were couple people I knew, in the Chamorro time, they exchange a portion of their lands for a bull cow, bulls were considered very valuable.

Q-7. What about in regards to the family matters, During the Japanese time, were the Chamorros allowed to marry the Japanese, or vise versa?

None, in the Japanese time, there was no such provision restricting marriage between the Japanese and the Chamorros, but you are closely observed, as to what family you are from, before you are married to their family, the Japanese, the Japanese might consider them as more superior than us, the Chamorros, but they don't have any restrictions to the marriage system. There were some of our people who were married to the Japanese people, but I knew that they do have a system, like you have to be in a certain class of family, like their belief in Imperialism, but not here in the Marianas.

Q-8. If I am not mistaken, as told by the people, the Japanese classified the Chamorro and the Carolinian people as lower class or better known as third class compared to them, What was the feeling of the natives about this?

For the Japanese to classify the class levels of the Japanese, Carolinians and the Chamorros, anyone can do that, considering the fact that I am paying you, I can say the same thing too, I can say you are second generation or third generation, but if we turn it around and we are the ones paying them, then, that you are third or so, but we know that these people were being backed up by large companies, that's why they are more capacitated than us, the local people. In Spanish time, we used mob, German money, when the Japanese came, we used yeng, then came the American and we use dollars, If we have our own money, like the yap people, which do not value the American money, to buy lands in yap, you have to have certain round stone money, so just like today, none of us have such money, maybe that's the reason, this Japanese, German and Spanish treat us as if we're their slaves, in Japanese they

say Santo kokomin.

Q-9. What about in religion, Did the Japanese gave the Chamorros freedom of religion, the Catholicism?

In the Japanese time, there was no such provision of restrictions or what religion people should be in. Only during the time when the war was near, they started urging the islanders to work, at the airfield called Kaisobu, they were to work, happy labor, to speed up the project, until after they bombed Pearl Harbor, that's when labor got hard, the youngsters had hard time, during this period, in fact even the students worked too, at the place where Joeten is today, before it was Japanese Airfield, all the students were required to work here, so the schools were closed. Whoever runs away from the labor were punished severely.

Q-10. Since we're into warfare, How old were you when the war started here?

Well after the war, no during the war, I was eight years old, going to nine, at that time, there are quite a lot, I remembered in the war time. In fact, we were already staying at Tutturam, known today as San Vicente, 'cause the Chamorros in Garapan were told to move out of the village. 'cause in the war time, villages are being attacked first.

Q-11. So, Where did you hide in war time?

One day before the war, we stayed in the cave, we have near our farm a very big cave, a lot of families stayed together inside this cave, more than four hundred Chamorros inside that cave, the lucky thing about us here, during this point in time, is that there was one among us, known as Tun Pitu, called, Jose Reyes Sablan, Tun Josen Pitu, he knew Spanish language, he was there, in the Spanish time. So when the Captain of the Army, came to our cave, he asked us first, if we were Catholic and they responded in Spanish language, yes we are Catholics and there are a lot of Chamorros in the cave, so then, they were all called outside, but there were some Japanese in the cave with us too, after we were out, they threw inside the cave a handgrenade and all who were inside died, even some of the Chamorros died too and also one of my sister/brother died.

Q-12. We'll come to that, How did you know that the war was over, and Did you have enough food supplies, during the war, in the cave?

If I am not mistaken, Herbert, within four days, in the war, ,we were taken out from the cave, 'cause

the war came 15th of June, and they took us, on 19th of June, and they took us to Camp Susupe, the military was very protective, at that time the area was already secured, that's where they attacked first, as for me, I was hospitalized on the ship, I was taken to the ship, 'cause my foot was hit by the hand grenade they threw in the cave. after four days it got swollen, no medicine, they only wipe, so it got really bad and I was taken to the ship, after three weeks, I was returned to Camp Susupe and stayed with my family. when I returned my sister who died, had already been buried, she died in the war.

Q-13. Many of our people lost a lot of their houses, domestic animals, plants and many other possessions. When it was time for them to claim their losses, Did they report them and were they compensated?

In fact, I also worked in the War Claim Commission, when I was a⁴ Congress, I volunteered at that time. A lot of people submitted their claims, on the destructions of the war, there are two classifications of war destructions. there's one type called Pre-war Claim and Post-war Claim, it means that, the Japanese are responsible for the destructions in the war, and the Americans are responsible for the destructions after the war, so the destructions which were claimed, were either Post Secure Claim or Pre-war Claim. I remembered some Chamorro people submitted their claim on the destructions of their houses. like burned, torn, bulldozed, some claimed their possessions, in their houses, all of these reports primarily recalls, as much as they can remember, all of their claims were probable estimates of the quantities. so I cannot say they were all precise and accurate, but at least, the figures show that there are losses in the war.

Q-14. Manny, almost every year, we celebrate the day when the Chamorros were liberated from the camp, known as Camp Susupe. Some of the people are saying that the gate, in reality, the Chamorros were released at Chalan Kanoa proper, where the Post Office is presently located or the old Municipal building?

When the Chamorros were liberated, in the year of July 4, 1946, just remember that in forty six, all the people were already staying at Chalan Kanoa, they were concentrated in one place in Chalan Kanoa, in the Kohachu buildings that were still standing, the people lived in those houses. The Chamorros lived in those houses. The Chamorros were at Camp Susupe, they were separated, the Chamorros, the Okinawans and the Japanese and the Koreans, they were not together. Then the Chamorros were taken to Chalan Kanoa in 1945. In 1946, the 4th of July, the gate was open, although the gate was left open, still you cannot freely go far places, 'cause almost everywhere on the island were militaries, just the

same. even at Obyan, Kagman, all, San Roque, all military, not all places you can go to, mostly restricted areas. unless you know someone there, or you have a friend, in the military areas.

Q-15. Before we close. I would like to ask you one important question. Previously you submitted some stories about Amelia Earhart, you mentioned that they were saying, she was here on Saipan, as a prisoner, at the Garapan, Japanese prison. Can you elaborate some on that?

Amelia Earhart, her proposal was circumnavigate the world, circumnavigate means to go around the world. but Amelia Earhart later, was found out that she was sent under the directions of the President, President Roosevelt, to check the islands, in the Pacific, on the developments of the Japanese, in the year of 1937, then Amelia Earhart was given an airplane called Lucky Delectra and went to Perdue University, Kansas City to install cameras that were very expensive, according to the testimonies I gathered from the elders here, like Tun Jesus Fain, Jesus Salas, Joaquina, my sister, 'cause Joaquina, my sister was working for the Chief Police as maid and she brought lunch to her boss at Garapan prison, and that's where other Chamorros which I also investigated them and they said that they actually saw the lady, but nobody knew exactly, how Amelia Earhart died. According to the last testimony by Tun Jesus Salas, he was also in the prison, he said, "Manny," if he can remember correctly, the old man, he said, "Two months before the war, they took the two out, and ever since, they don't know what happen, whether they got killed or what." Also just recently, there were these people from the Unsolve Mystery, who came here, from Los Angeles looking for me. We had contract to pick them up at the Airport on Saturday and show them the place, but they came on Friday, so we didn't meet. They went to Visitors Bureau and asked where can they locate me, they were looking around for me that day, but they could not find me, 'cause I was also out sightseeing, so Earhart was shot down in Marshall island, she stayed in the Marshall island about three months, before she came to Saipan in early 1938. I mean 1939, when Amelia Earhart arrived she was made a prisoner from that time on. She stayed here 'cause the Nanyo Chokang, known as the South Sea High Commissioner, in Head Quarters Saipan, that is why she was sent here.

Q-16. Well. Thank You very much Mr. Muna, Do you have other information that you want to share with us, since we are discussing the histories of the Japanese today in the Marianas?

I think we covered most of them already, I am looking at your questionnaires, Mr. Rosario if you want, I am also very willing for your document, when completed to share with others and obtain from

others, too, my words might not necessarily be as true to others, so feel free to do so. You have to compile them all, I'll tell you the truth that, if you don't do it today all these histories of the Marianas will be lost and never be recovered back.

CLOSING: I thank you very much once more Mr. Muna, we will be calling you over, when this piece of document is in it's final form and we will show you which ones to publish and or which ones not to.

If you want, your next interview, can be in English language, it's not a problem, I can speak English.

Thank You.....