

INTERVIEW WITH
Ford Q. and Anita M. Elvidge

by

Thomas Soapes
Oral Historian

on

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for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library



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This interview is being conducted with Mr. & Mrs. Ford Elvidge in their home in Seattle, Washington, on July 28, 1976. The interviewer is Dr. Thomas Soapes of the Eisenhower Library. Present for the interview are Mr. & Mrs. Elvidge and Dr. Soapes.

DR. SOAPES: Mr. Elvidge would you tell me where and when you were born and about your formal education.



MR. ELVIDGE: Well I was born on November 30, 1892 in Oakland, California, and I attended the Oakland grade schools there and the Oakland high school. And then in 1911 my folks moved up to Vancouver, British Columbia. And my brother and I came north, of course, with my mother and father and we lived in Vancouver, B.C. until 1916 when we moved down to Seattle. And during that time up there I studied under a private tutor for the McGill matriculation qualifications in order to study for the practice of law in British Columbia. And I started there for that purpose. But I didn't care to join the Canadian bar, so in 1916 I came down to Seattle and entered the University of Washington and was studying law there when the first world war came on in 1917 and I enlisted in the service of the American forces.

SOAPES: Did you go overseas?

ELVIDGE: No. I was commissioned and sent to a training camp and I got as far as Camp Mills, New York when the armistice came

on and I was sent home.

SOAPES: And did you go into business when you came back?



ELVIDGE: As soon as I got out of the service, which was on the 28th day of February, 1919, I came home from Camp Mills. I was discharged at Hoboken, New Jersey and sent into the office of Tucker and Hyland in Seattle, lawyers. And I stayed with that firm until I retired three or four years ago. And by the process of erosion, shall I say, I finally reached the head of the firm.

SOAPES: Did you actively participate in politics?

ELVDIGE: Yes, I was very active in Republican politics for about, oh, twenty, twenty-five years I guess. Maybe thirty.

SOAPES: What drew you to the Republican party? Was that the family's party?

ELVDIGE: Well my father was always a Republican and so I was always a Republican.

SOAPES: About what year did you start your active involvement in politics?

ELVIDGE: Well I would say it was just about the time that [Frank] Roosevelt was elected to the first term, or just a little before that perhaps. I opposed Roosevelt and from that time on I was active in Seattle.

SOAPES: Did you hold offices in the Republican party organization?

ELVIDGE: No, I never held office, but I supported the policy and the office holders.

SOAPES: In 1952, did you work in the campaign for General Eisenhower?

ELVIDGE: In 1952, to tell the truth, I was a Taft man. It was not because I was opposed to Eisenhower. I recognized Eisenhower as being a great man. First, a great soldier. But Taft, to my mind was tremendously experienced in statesmanship and politics, administration of the government in this country, and I felt that he was the better man. And so I supported Taft. But I didn't take a tremendously active part for Taft as against Eisenhower.



SOAPES: In 1952 you were not a delegate to either the state or the national conventions?

ELVIDGE: No.

SOAPES: How did your appointment as the Governor of Guam come about?

ELVIDGE: Well, if I were to tell you the whole story I'd be here most of the morning. But--

SOAPES: I've got plenty of time.

ELVIDGE: Well, to shorten it up, Douglas McKay of Oregon, was appointed Secretary of the Interior by Eisenhower just after he was inaugurated in January of 1953. I knew Douglas McKay, but not very well. I just knew him, that's all. But Douglas McKay had the assignment as Secretary of the Interior of selecting the men that Eisenhower wanted to fill his different positions. And by reason of certain circumstances, the governorship of Guam had become vacant. The governor of Guam had resigned right after Eisenhower's inauguration. And Doug McKay's assistant in that department for the purpose of helping him procure men to fill the different positions that Eisenhower had to fill, McKay's



assistant was a Seattle man by the name of Davis.

SOAPES: Is that Clarence Davis?



MRS. ELVIDGE: Raymond.

ELVIDGE: Raymond Davis. Raymond C. Davis. Well, Davis was a Seattle man. Very well known to me. He and I were close friends. His family and my family, you might say, grew up together. So he telephoned me from Washington to ask me to become governor of Guam. Well, at that particular time I was engaged in a lobbying service at the legislature. I had represented all of the major oil companies at Olympia--that's our capital--for eighteen or twenty years. But I had resigned. But in the meantime, after I had resigned that position as representing all of them, I was rehired by the Shell Oil Company, who was a client of our firm and had been since they were doing business in Seattle, I suppose 1912. So the officials of the Shell Oil Company asked me to go to Olympia to lobby for Shell, just the one company, our client, to see about getting the laws of Washington and the constitution of the state of Washington amended so that Shell, which was a foreign corporation, could own land to build a refinery. Shell was owned by the Royal Dutch interests and was a foreign

corporation; could not own land under our constitution nor our state laws. So I had just assumed this assignment at the opening of the legislature in January of 1953, which was when Eisenhower was inaugurated.



So Davis phoned me this particular morning, about noon--I was at the office--and asked me to become governor of Guam, which was--well, to say it was a shock would put it mildly because I had no intention of assuming a public office. I wasn't looking for a public office. I had a substantial practice of law, and I was perfectly satisfied with my lot. But he was quite insistent. He said that the governor out there had resigned and Eisenhower had to get another governor right away because the island was in a kind of a mess and Doug McKay had to get the job filled. Well, I was in the office and I had conversations with Davis about the matter for twenty minutes or half an hour, during which time I accused him of being crazy. He told me that he never was more sane in his life and that Eisenhower had just gone into office and needed help and it was up to the people of this country to help him. And he gave me quite a song and dance. And I told him, well I said, "Ray, I'm down at the legislature on a

job." And I said, "This spring, just as soon as the legislative session is over, Mrs. Elvidge and I are going to Europe."

He says, "Ford, that's all out the window. Eisenhower needs help. This country is on fire." He said, "Eisenhower's got to get it back in order again." And I asked him what the circumstances were of living out there and he said, "It's okay. They have a new government house. You'll be comfortable."

Well, I said, "What's the job pay?"

He said, "Thirteen thousand, one hundred and twenty-five dollars a year."

I said, "What's the hundred and twenty-five dollars for?"

He said, "Air mail postage."

I said, "When do you want to know?"

"I want to know tomorrow morning."

"Well," I said, "You're giving me a lot of time, aren't you?"

"I'm giving you overnight, phone me tomorrow morning, tell me whether you'll take it or won't take it."

Well, I was stunned to tell you the truth. I was at the office, it was about half-past eleven or quarter to twelve, and I had a woman in my office that I was talking with, consulting about something--I don't remember her name or what it was about--



I got rid of her quick. I had a date out at the south end-- woman had passed away, I had consulted her husband about her estate, one thing and another, and so I decided I'd better get some lunch. Went down to the lobby of the building where the restaurant is, where I'd eaten lunch many, many times. I couldn't find that restaurant. I walked up and down that hall and could not find that restaurant! And I suddenly woke up and I said to myself, "You've got to come out of this, now. Get going." And so I found the restaurant, had a quick lunch, and went out on this assignment that I had, got back to the office about half-past two or three o'clock, I guess. My son-in-law who is employed in the office, who is now a senior partner of the firm since I retired, I telephoned him on the intercom and I said, "John, where is Guam?"

He said, "Guam?"

And I said, "Yes, where's Guam?"

"Well," he said, "Out in the west Pacific."

"Oh," I said, "I know that, but where is it out in the west Pacific."

"Well," he said, "I don't know. I'm going up to the library; I'll phone you and let you know. I'll look it up."

"Well," I said, "Do it as soon as you can."



So in about fifteen minutes he called me and he said, "Just about fifteen hundred miles from Manila."

I said, "Okay. Thanks very much."

He said, "What's it all about. What did you want to know for?"

"Oh," I said, "just curiosity, that's all."

So, I came home. But Anita wasn't home. Pretty soon she came in and she had to go down the hall to change her clothes and I went down with her and I said, "I heard the funniest thing today. Some damned fool was asked by the President to go out to Guam, be its governor." I said, "I can't think of a more crazy idea." Well, she made no comment. And I said, "Just think of it, went out to Guam to be its governor." No comment. I wanted to get a rise out of her. So finally I said, "Ray Davis phoned me this morning and he says the President wants me to go to Guam to be governor."

"Well," she said, "You didn't turn it down, did you?" She said, "We're going, aren't we?"

MRS. ELVIDGE: Oh, now wait. The rest is in the book (Guam Interlude). I think you better wait and check with that.



ELVIDGE: So that ended it. That decided it. She decided it, (like most everything else). We went to the library that evening and couldn't find out anything about Guam; nothing had been written about Guam in the last fifty years and more, just a south sea island. So I was going out there. But we didn't sleep all night. But the thing that bothered me was this: When Eisenhower was general of the armies and he called for men, men had to go. They couldn't say no. Now we said to ourselves, he's called for somebody, he's called for me. He wants some help. I've got to go. I can't say no. And so I phoned Ray in the morning about seven o'clock--it was ten o'clock over there, and I said, "Okay, Ray, I'll go."

He said, "I knew you would."

And so then we had a conversation one thing and another. Well, that's it.

SOAPES: So about what month was it that you arrived in Guam?

ELVIDGE: About the fore part of April, 1953.

SOAPES: Guam had been a major center for military activity in the war. Were there still signs of that when you arrived in 53?



ELVIDGE: Oh, yes. You see at that time nobody could get on the island; it had been under tight security. Nobody could get on the island without clearance from the United States Navy and the secretary of war--and the--



SOAPES: Secretary of Defense?

ELVIDGE: No, the secretary of, the secretary of the--

MRS. ELVIDGE: Interior?

ELVIDGE: Secretary of the Navy. Without clearance from the chief of naval operations and the Secretary of the Navy. You had to get a clearance before you got on the island. Because as I say it was tight security, and the navy was still in complete control of the island, although the civilian phase of it was under complete civilian control but the navy had control of access and departure from the island. As a matter of fact, when I was at the airport in Honolulu and went to the airport to get my tickets validated to take the plane to Guam that night the officer in charge of transportation asked me for my navy clearance. I said, "I don't have any clearance."

"Well, then," he said, "how do you expect to get on the island if you haven't got permission from the navy?"

I said, "I'm going out as the governor of the island."

"Well," he said, "why didn't you say that in the first place."

And so that was that. But it was the navy's control.

SOAPES: Did the navy's control of access diminish while you were there?

ELVIDGE: Not while I was there. It remained under navy control, but today the navy has no control over ingress and egress from the island. The navy has surrendered all that in the last twelve or fourteen years, fifteen, twenty years.

SOAPES: When you arrived, what was the attitude of the native population on Guam toward American government?

ELVIDGE: You see Guam had been a possession of the United States and under the control of the navy, and the navy captain was always the governor of the island. And the Guamanian people had no objection to that; they got along fine with the navy. Oh, they had their differences, but I mean substantially it was a very happy relationship. And then in 1950, August 1, Guam was



made a territory and the natives, they were all given their citizenship and control was taken away from the navy and the civilian governor was appointed. I was the second civilian governor. So August 1, 1950 was the first civilian governor, and in 1953 I became the second civilian governor. Put it this way, I went out there as an appointee of Eisenhower, which was true, and Eisenhower had tremendous acceptance in this country, you know. He was looked upon by everybody as a great man and highly respected. And so when I went out there, I was a representative of Eisenhower. So therefore, a great deal of the respect for Eisenhower reflected in my favor and so I got along very well with them. But that relationship between civilian government and the civilian people was to a certain extent disintegrating as they gained more control. They began to feel their oats, so to speak, and began to, well, just as the Congress feels it's more important than the President, so the Guam legislature began to assume a more important feeling than that awarded to the civilian governor.

SOAPES: What was the size of the legislature?

ELVIDGE: The legislature was the unicameral legislature, one house, twenty-one members.



SOAPES: They were elected from equal population districts?

ELVIDGE: They were elected at-large.

SOAPES: Oh, it was at-large election.

ELVIDGE: Yes. They were not by districts.

SOAPES: The legislature, was it divided on partisan lines. Were there political parties?

ELVIDGE: Not as we know it. Oh, some of them said they were Republicans and some were Democrats, but between you and me they were all Democrats.

SOAPES: They ran, then, more as individuals rather than on a party slate when they ran for the legislature?

ELVIDGE: Yes.

SOAPES: Had you received a briefing from the Department of the Interior before you went out?

ELVIDGE: Yes, I went back to Washington a couple of times, and there was a young man and a young lady in the Department of Interior who had been on Guam and had much to do with the changeover



from navy controls to civilian control, and they were very familiar with the setup and they gave me a great deal of help.



SOAPES: Had they told you about what kinds of problems to expect?

ELVIDGE: Oh, yes, in a general way. Of course, I made my own investigation of that.

[Interruption]

SOAPES: Mrs. Elvidge, when you arrived there--I assume you focused on setting up housekeeping and that sort of thing--what type of a situation did you run into?

MRS. ELVIDGE: Well, I hardly knew what to expect so I was tremendously interested in everything and anything. We were met at the airport by the governor's car and a driver with his gloves and his uniform, and I'd never been used to anything like that. We drove up to this old navy building that had been used by former navy officers and that was to be the governor's house because they didn't have a real government building at that time, but they were in the process of building one. And it had been designed by [Richard] Neutra, I found, of Los Angeles; it was to

be a very modern house. And I was the one who had to decide just how the thing would be completed. I didn't have anything to do with the designing of it. Well anyway, we lived in this interesting little house up on the top of this great cliff above the ocean, and it was all screens and we hadn't lived in a house like that. But we had two nice servants there, a Guamanian woman and her husband, and a good Chinese cook. So it really was a nice setup and I just went to work. Of course we did have the help of the lieutenant governor and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. [Randall] Herman, who were on the island and had been there along with the former governor. The two men had been former navy people and they just took over. And so they were very helpful and very kind, and we really had no trouble at all. And there was a judge and his wife, our next door neighbor, and they were very helpful. They were statesiders. And then we found--

SOAPES: What was the judge's name?

MRS. ELVIDGE: Judge [Paul] Shriver and his wife [Melba]; they live in Denver. They've retired. And then, of course, the Bishop lived nearby, and he was a very powerful influence on the island. He was a New York man. And very cooperative



and we had very interesting associations with him. All together we enjoyed our contacts there very much, and I enjoyed everything I did out there. I had charge of the house; I didn't try to interfere with the legislature or the governor. Tried to keep him happy; that's all I was asked to do.



SOAPES: In terms of, I suppose you'd call them the domestic conveniences of American life, I'm thinking in terms of sanitation, of being able to get food and that sort of thing--did you have any problems in that regard?

MRS. ELVIDGE: Very, very few, because the navy had been in charge before and they're the ones who had charge of the water. You see, there's a large reservoir and it's just rain water, but they keep it in condition and they keep it properly sanitized. We had electricity and all the modern conveniences. And the stores had all the frozen foods that we were accustomed to having. We didn't have--well, I tell in the book "Guam Interlude" of all the things we had to do, because we had trouble getting fresh eggs and the Guamanians are not really farmers. And they don't grow very much out there even when the navy tried to make farmers out of them; and I think every governor has tried since. But

they're used to being taken care of by the government and it's worked out very well for them. And so I didn't have any trouble. I used to have to do the shopping and I had to keep track of the expenditures, but that was all part of the fun.



SOAPES: Mr. Elvidge, your wife just made mention of the role of the Bishop. He was a powerful political force. How did you deal with him? Did you have any major problems?

ELVIDGE: No, I did not. The Bishop, of course, was the head of the Catholic church on Guam. Of course, they knew before I landed on the island, because they had investigated the matter, they knew that I was a Republican but there was a Democratic atmosphere. And they knew I was a Mason, which is not necessarily compatible with the Roman Catholic church. But I contacted the Bishop very soon after I got there and told him that I had no intention whatsoever, not the least, of in any way interfering with the activities of the church. That was the church's business. But I said, "By the same token, I wanted no interference with my administration of the government." And so we got along fine. The Bishop called on our home, came to our home at our invitation for dinner every now and then. We went to the Bishop's residence for dinner every now and then. So there was complete rapport,

so to speak, between the Bishop and ourselves. However, I had to be very, very careful to be sure that I did not do anything or say anything that might in any way be offensive to the church. Because naturally I was not in favor with their philosophy, which was to be expected. But we had no trouble.



SOAPES: I believe, Mrs. Elvidge, you said that he used to sit in the legislature and watch--

MRS. ELVIDGE: He had a representative. One of the priests used to sit up there on the platform in the legislature and see that they all voted correctly. Of course they had their patron saint in every village and they had all of their church activities. As for the women, I had trouble getting really acquainted with most of the women because they were not supposed to have activities outside of their home or their church. I only met two or three of them practically; one of them was a Mrs. Johnston who had been married to a navy man, been educated by him and she became very prominent in the school system. She was a teacher out there for over fifty years, and her young people were continuing in her way. But they were the exceptional family. The other families we

couldn't really get acquainted with.

SOAPES: Did you ever find this matter of a priest sitting in the legislature, watching how people voted, causing problems? Did they actually change votes that were close?



ELVIDGE: Well, the number one priest on the island, Father Flores sat in all the sessions of the legislature. However, there were two or three Catholics in the legislature that didn't see eye-to-eye with him, and so I would say that they got along all right.

There was one occasion when the Catholic church was very influential. You see when I went out there, there were two things on the island that were rampant: one was gambling and the other was prostitution. And certain things took place whereby I had a responsibility, for trying to get rid of those things. Well, the prostitution was the result of taxi-dancers, and you know what taxi-dancers are.

SOAPES: No, I don't.

ELVIDGE: Well, taxi-dancers were girls that frequented the dance halls and for fifty dollars or some sum like that, one man could dance with them for five minutes. But that five minutes was

merely for the purpose of dating for an opportunity for a liaison, and it was getting pretty bad. And some of the women on the island, Guamanian as well as stateside, put the bee on me and said, "You got to stop this. It's getting pretty bad and it's got to come to an end. We want to see it stopped." Well, I told them that I couldn't run the show, the legislature did, but I would put a bill in there to ban taxi-dancing.



MRS. ELVIDGE: Didn't the Filipinos have something to do with that, though?

ELVIDGE: Yes. But I said that I'd put a bill in there to outlaw taxi-dancing. And I said, "Then we'll send these girls home." Well, when the legislature came into session, which was a month or two later, I tossed the bill in there. Well, of course, some of the legislators, two particularly, were in the business of selling jewelry and fine clothing and all that, to these girls who had plenty of money. And they didn't want to see taxi-dancing stopped; they didn't want to see this money cut off. They came to see me about it.

They said, "That's a private enterprise. The Republicans

are in favor of private enterprise."

"Well," I said, "you're getting too public for me. It's got to be stopped."

The bill sat in the legislature for two weeks and nothing happened. They wouldn't pass it, of course, they wouldn't touch it until we happened to have a party one night and the Bishop was present. And I told the Bishop, I said, "I have that bill in there and they won't pass it; they won't do anything about it." And I said, "The women of this island are putting the bee on me." and I said, "it's time this thing was stopped, don't you think?"

He said, "I'll see that it's stopped right away." He knew the darned bill was in there and wasn't doing anything about it. He said, "I'll see that it's stopped right away."

The bill came out of the committee, came before the legislature, and was passed unanimously; that quick, because his representative on the floor told them to pass that bill and they did. And then, of course, the taxi-dancers went home. They were from Manila and from Hawaii, and they took the next plane out, and that ended it. But of course that's been going on since the year one and will continue, but organized prostitution stopped. Now that's an example of the power of the church on that island--when it moves, it moves thoroughly.



MRS. ELVIDGE: I thought a lot had to do with the importation of so much labor from the Philippines and so many unmarried men there; these Filipinos, you see. They were a big part. It wasn't that the Guamanians as a whole are not the right kind of people; they are. They adhere to their church principles; they're good family men, most of them.



SOAPES: But it was mainly Philippine men and women who had come in.

MRS. ELVIDGE: That's right.

ELVIDGE: Oh, well, it was generally practiced by the white men on the island, too.

MRS. ELVIDGE: Oh, but they had how many? Fifteen hundred, three thousand. How many Filipinos were there? Because of construction going on after the war, you see, they were employed--plane loads of them.

ELVIDGE: Well, they had there on the island two big construction camps. They were building those two big airfields from which the planes left for Vietnam, you know, and they were under construction while we were there. Tremendous big fields, northwest

field, and I forget the name of the other one. And of course they used something like eight or ten thousand Filipinos in that work. And they recruited them from Manila. But they didn't bring their wives; couldn't bring their wives, just the men alone, except the bosses. They could bring their wives. And soon these men began to patronize these girls and they began to bring the girls in from Manila and from Honolulu and the things going like--

MRS. ELVIDGE: It was getting out of hand.



ELVIDGE: --fire when I--these particular times, getting worse. And every now and then I'd get a letter from some woman in the Philippines; it would go like this. "You governor of Guam; my husband, or my boy, Pedro, he work there in camp. He don't write letters. What's the matter my husband? You find out. Is he sick? You find out what's the matter, tell him to write me." Well, I knew what was the matter; he's spending his money the wrong way; he wasn't sending anything home.

So the boss of the construction, one of the bosses, he'd get ahold of Pedro and he'd say, "Pedro, you want to go home?"

"No, no, me no want to go home."

"Okay, you write a letter; you send your money back to your wife right away or I've got to send you home right away."

"I send my money back home." So that ended that because they didn't want to go home. They were to get tremendous pay on Guam and they got nothing in Manila. They were lucky to be on Guam and getting that money.



SOAPES: These were American wage rates that they were being paid on Guam?

ELVIDGE: Well, no, they weren't getting as much as they'd get here in this country. Not the union wages, but it'd be a lot more than they'd get in Manila.

SOAPES: Was there any way that the navy, with it's control of access to the island, could have stopped the flow of women coming in?

ELVIDGE: Well, Admiral [Arthur] Radford, who was, you probably know who Radford was.

SOAPES: Yes.

ELVIDGE: He was the chief of naval operations for the island and he was a big man and became a very good friend of mine. And he said to me when I first went out there, he said, "You're

going to have a lot of trouble out there with these taxi-dancers."



"Well," I said, "Who are the taxi-dancers?" So he explained it to me. "Well," I said, "You've got control of the island, why do you let them on the island?"

"Why," he said, "we can't stop anybody going on the island unless they have a record. If any citizen comes in, says, 'I want to go to the island,' we have to let them go. They're American citizens. Unless they've got a record of some misbehavior, misconduct of some kind, then we can stop them." And he said, "We don't know anything about these girls unless they've got some kind of a record." And that's how they get on.

SOAPES: Were there other major problems that you had to deal with? I'm thinking in terms of economics or--

ELVIDGE: Oh, yes. I had problems all the time.

SOAPES: What was the major one that you remember dealing with?

ELVIDGE: Well, I'll tell you one problem that I had. That was the commercial port. See, the commercial port, the port that was not under control of the navy, was the port for the shipping

and for the commerce of Guam. Not the naval, not the military commerce, but the civilian commerce. And that came to the commercial port. Well, the commercial port was under the control of the port commissioner, and our port commissioner was--



MRS. ELVIDGE: Leon Guererro.

ELVIDGE: Was Leon Guererro. Well, Leon Guererro was a smart Guamanian but he had very little ability. But he just knew how to get along, and he was the commissioner of the port. So he was getting a good salary. But the port was being run in a lousy manner, so to speak, and the Pacific Far East lines that did most of the shipping, they landed at Guam every two weeks, I think. They came from Alameda, California, shipping from California. They had a fine organization that came to Guam every two weeks; they would come and see me and complain about Leon Guererro. "Well," I said, "what do you want me to do about it? I know he's incompetent."

"I want you to fire him."

"Well," I said, "who will I put in his place?" I said, "I can't fire anybody without putting someone in his place."

They said, "I'll find you a man."

"All right," I said, "you find me a man and I'll appoint him

and fire Guererro."

And so about a month or two later he said, "I got the man for you." He said, "He's one of our men from Alameda, Encinal." He said, "He'll come out here and he'll run the port."

"Well," I said, "I don't want to fire Guererro. I'll get in trouble if I do; he's a very popular politician on the island." I said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. We'll hire this man from Encinal to work under Guererro and we'll get Guererro to hire him and boss him, but he'll do the work. He'll run the show himself and Guererro won't know it." And so that was all right.

So I hired this fellow with the understanding that he work for Guererro. Guererro will remain to be port commissioner and he apparently would be an employee under Guererro, but as a matter of fact he ran the whole show. But he was just smart enough to know how to do that. So we had to pay him seventy-five thousand dollars a year plus all expenses--that was a lot of money. And I had to sell that to the legislature. But I did, and we hired him. And he just got along fine with Guererro and they brought Guererro back to Alameda and they wined him and dined him and gave him a good time, told him what a great man he was, et



cetera, et cetera. Which just set well with Guererro. So he changed over the whole port setup because the trouble with the port was they didn't know how to unload cargo and how to load it. Because there was a way to do that, to do it right and save time, and a way to do it wrong. And he showed them how to do it the right way, and how to correlate it with the method of sacking and shipping in Alameda, you see, so they could take it right out. The situation improved very well. And so he was there for a year and they let me hire him for a second year. But as soon as I left the island, they fired him.

MRS. ELVIDGE: Well, they also enclosed the area and he kept the thievery down. They used to drive their trucks up and steal things. There was no control over it at all so that people could stick stuff into a big sack and go away with it.

ELVIDGE: Oh, yes. He just ran the whole thing the way it should be run. And Guererro, he sat on the sidelines and twiddled his thumbs. He thought he was a big shot.

SOAPES: Did you find this to be a universal pattern in dealing with the Guamanians, these problems of corruption, of incompetence?



ELVIDGE: It wasn't primarily a matter of corruption. They were not stealing, anything like that, but incompetency was the order of the day because they were just cheap politicians that had been appointed, you know, under the old regime. And they were prominent Catholics or prominent this or prominent that, and they had no ability. Except for a few of them, they were just fellows that, through their petty--well, I couldn't fire them because that would have been, politically, suicide. Because I couldn't interfere with their political setup. So I had to handle it in a different way, like I did Guerrerro. In other words, let them think they were still running the show and put somebody in that could run it.

MRS. ELVIDGE: Well, didn't you find that they had been spoiled by our government because until the war they'd never really bothered with money. They used to climb trees and export copra and that sort of thing, and you couldn't get anybody to climb a palm tree--half of them don't even eat coconuts anymore. But that used to be their life; they were tropical people. To us they seemed lazy until we knew that they weren't really lazy, they were just tropical. They weren't good farmers but they were kind people and they were good to one another and they were nice to know and deal with. But



as far as efficiency went, they just didn't know what that meant. And any of the young people that showed any ambition or desire to better their way would come over to the states on scholarships-- they didn't want to go back. They'd stay here. So they were having a problem getting their own leaders to come back and be their doctors and their lawyers and their leaders on the island. They preferred to stay in the states. It's changing now, of course, but this was twenty-years ago when it was still with conditions from the war. We paid for all their cattle and their--everything that they lost in the war.

ELVIDGE: We had a commission that appraised everything that they lost, all the chickens and all the trees and all the land and everything else that was taken or condemned or ruined by the taking of the island. We paid them for their losses--cash, gold. Well, they spent it. But some of them were smart enough to keep it and go in business, and those men became very wealthy on the island. But the most of them spent what they had and they were just peons again.

MRS. ELVIDGE: One or two of them got the beer permits and became the brewery people and others got some of the money to



go into stores and that sort of thing. But for the most part, they'd just squander it.

SOAPES: It was a completely different lifestyle from the United States.

MRS. ELVIDGE: Oh, entirely. And they'd never had cash before. They didn't know what it was, to have a lot of money, you see. But now they know; they've gone on relief and they've gotten pensions and they have use of the PX and they know how to use it now. But they needed to be taken care of most of them.

SOAPES: So these problems of management of a big port would be something that was really quite foreign to them.

MRS. ELVIDGE: That's right, that's right.

[Interruption]

SOAPES: One question that I've overlooked was just what were your major powers and duties as governor?

MRS. ELVIDGE: Schools were certainly one.

ELVIDGE: As governor of the island I had all the power. I guess



I don't know quite what you mean. I had control of the schools and control of the hospital, control of the port. I was responsible for everything except what was under military control.



MRS. ELVIDGE: You had to bring the heads of all these departments in, had to get them here in the States and that was no small job. You had to get them through all sorts of placement bureaus, through the government, through private parties, through associations. Trying to get the head of the education, the head electrician, and the head engineers and all, and it was really hard to get people that really wanted to come to a place like Guam. If they were successful here, they're not going to give up a good job, most of them, to go out there.

SOAPES: Were you able to get competent people to come out?

ELVIDGE: On the whole I got some very competent people. But, of course, I made some mistakes. But on the whole, I got some very competent people. Now, one of the most competent men that I got was a man that became the head of the police department and fire department. His name was--

MRS. ELVIDGE: Brown. Ted Brown.

ELVIDGE: --Ted Brown. He was a young man, he came from Eugene, Oregon. I doubt if he was much more than thirty when he came out there. And he just took that police department and took the fire department and he just made a real go-getting organization out of both of them. Did a wonderful job. And when I left the island, he said that he wouldn't stay any longer; he wanted to go too and wanted to know if I would refer him to another job. Well, I contacted the department that had charge of sending officers to foreign countries to clean up their enforcement situation, which was right down his alley. And his wife, who was just a young girl, just recently married to him, he and she did a wonderful job for the government. And he's served in various parts of the world representing our government. He only retired here about two years ago; he came to see us. And they--

MRS. ELVIDGE: They were in Liberia. Remember he wrote to us from Liberia; he was doing things there. He was in Athens. And they became very important because they were doing wonderful, wonderful reorganization of those various countries in their military and fire departments.

ELVIDGE: He just knew his business.



SOAPES: What was the quality of schools and hospitals that you found?

ELVIDGE: Well, the hospital was not good. But the schools, the schools were surprisingly good. The teaching personnel, most of it, came from the states. But some of them were Guamanian men and women and they were very good. They had been taught by the navy, and they were very good. But the hospital was in bad shape.

MRS. ELVIDGE: Well, the present governor's wife is the daughter of one of the men Ford brought out to be head of the high school out there, and she, they say, is the governor at present. She married a Guamanian and they are in the Government House running the island, doing a wonderful job.

SOAPES: The hospital lacked competent technical personnel?

ELVIDGE: Yes, particularly in the management part. The head of the hospital, just before I went out there, had committed suicide; something had happened to him and another man had been appointed and he was not good. But anyway, he was a statesider; I fired him. I absolutely fired him. Just like that. He was



incompetent. You see, the trouble was we couldn't pay them very much, and a doctor and the hospital employee could earn so much more in the states than they could on Guam. There was no incentive to go to Guam. So when I landed there, they had a half a dozen doctors who'd been recruited from Europe. They had left Europe because of the turbulence and turmoil and trouble following the second world war. And they were there on the island, and they were fair doctors, but they were a little difficult to fit into the local scene. So the hospital was always more or less of a problem.



MRS. ELVIDGE: Of course they always had the big navy hospital out there, and if anyone had any choice, they would choose to go to the Navy hospital.

ELVIDGE: Oh, well, the navy hospital, of course, was a fine institution, but the Guamanians didn't have access to that.

MRS. ELVIDGE: And people who went out there had to be part missionary or else they were running away from something before they'd ever go to Guam. But lots of wives helped as teachers, navy wives, and they had about a couple hundred of those every year.

SOAPES: What about your communication with Washington while you were out there? Did you get a great deal of instruction from Washington, or were you basically on your own?

ELVIDGE: Well, Doug McKay said to me, the first time I went back--just after I was appointed, just after I was confirmed by the Senate--he said, "Governor, it's your baby." He said, "I don't want to hear anything about it. And everything you do will be right." He said, "There'll be nothing wrong that you do. Just don't bother me." So I took him to mean by that that I better run that show myself and do it right; they didn't want to be bothered in Washington. And so that was what I did, pretty much my own way.

MRS. ELVIDGE: That's what they told me. I thought I ought to have a Green Book out there, the way they have in Washington, to find out about people and know how to introduce and how to write and how to seat them at the table and all. And the clerk in the office just laughed. She said, "All you have to do is the way they're accustomed to doing--native way and your own common sense." She said, "You'll get along." Oh, and the people



that came out there on the island, they didn't want to bother with it either. They just wanted to go shopping in Hong Kong. All those legislators and so forth, great time with them.

SOAPES: How about your relations with the Congress. I'm sure they had a number who would come out to visit occasionally, wouldn't they?

MRS. ELVIDGE: Tell about the senator who sent for us to come to Honolulu because he didn't want to bother with Guam.

ELVIDGE: Well, Guam was a great example of this junketing on the part of the members of the legislature. I can give you an example. Of course, they were tickled to death to go out there to get to Hong Kong. They wanted to do some shopping in Hong Kong. They weren't interested in Guam, but they went to Guam because it looked good, but they were after Hong Kong. Well, anyway, I got word from the secretary of the interior that there would be a group of congressmen coming out to Guam and would spend a few days on Guam and that I would be expected to entertain them and show them what the island was all about. And he gave me the time when they would be there. Well, this group



of congressmen, headed by--well, he was a congressman from Chicago, don't remember his name and it's probably a good thing-- I didn't hear from them, but I knew they were in Honolulu. So I sent a wire to him and asked him when I might expect them on Guam, that I was prepared to entertain them and give them all information necessary. Meantime I had made tremendous preparations for them. I was going to call a special session of the legislature for them to appear before it, and oh, I was going to give them the red-carpet treatment. Well, he wired back and he said they were so terribly busy they didn't think they'd make Guam and would I come to Honolulu? So I bundled up my wife and headed for Honolulu.

MRS. ELVIDGE: Mr. and Mrs. [Del] Nucker, head of the Trust Territory, went out there; he was asked to go, too. So the four of us went.

ELVIDGE: So he and I went to Honolulu. Of course, that was no punishment; we'd always liked Honolulu. And of course we went to Honolulu two or three times a year on our way to Washington. And I always planned to spend two or three days on the beach. And so we went to Honolulu. Well, I spotted the group there at



the Royal Hawaiian, and about the second day I was there I approached this particular congressman, told him who I was and that I was at his service and would be glad indeed to give him any information that he would be interested in. Oh, well, he was very glad to meet me and glad I took the trouble to come and see him, et cetera, et cetera and they were all pretty busy and in just a couple of days why, he'd set up a conference with myself and Wilder King who was the governor of Hawaii. He said, "I'll be in touch with you." Okay. So I waited a couple of more days. Nothing happened. And I saw him around the hotel there, busy as he could be, you know, drinking cocktails. And so the second time I went up to him and told him I'd have to get--"Oh, why, oh, yes, of course, of course. So glad you came here. I understand you're doing a fine job out there. Yes, I want to know more, want to know all about Guam. Yes, yes. And I'll get ahold of Wilder King. Tomorrow noon, could you spare the time?"

"Oh, yes, I can spare the time."

"So tomorrow noon you and Wilder and I'll have lunch right out here in the patio of the Royal."



"Okay," I says, "I'll be there."

So tomorrow came, Wilder and I met him there and we had lunch for about an hour and a half, or two hours. And so help me, from the time we sat down to the time we got up, he didn't do a damn thing but talk. He didn't ask a single question about Guam. And when we got through listening to him, the meeting broke up. He thanked me again for coming out there and he said he was sorry he couldn't go to Guam but they were too busy, but it was very nice of me to come. He said, "I thought you and your wife would like to have a holiday anyway." Well, I thanked him, et cetera. So I took the plane back to Guam that night. So help me, he didn't learn any more about Guam than the man across the street.

MRS. ELVIDGE: They had another couple with them and they were in the habit of doing that every winter; come out there for a month, stay at the Royal.

ELVIDGE: That was his business trip to Guam, and that's the kind of a junket they're pulling all the time in Washington where the example I gave you is only one. We had a number of those.

SOAPES: Did you have much direct contact with the White House?



ELVIDGE: No, not very much. I had a little, but not very much.

MRS. ELVIDGE: We went back always once or twice a year.

ELVIDGE: But I went back to all the governor's conferences, of course, every year. And I always had the pleasure of having lunch and dinner at the White House, meeting the President and Mamie.



MRS. ELVIDGE: And they were always very cordial.

ELVIDGE: Tell you one experience that I'll never forget. This was in 1955. Nita and I wanted to go around the world, which we did, and I was entitled to some time off. So I took a month off and went around the world by the west. So when we came to Lisbon, Portugal, we registered there. And that night, going in to dinner, I passed a library, the door was open, and I just stepped inside. And there on the table was a copy of the Reader's Digest. And the cover page had a big picture of Eisenhower on it. And the lead article was "A Conference With The President." And I took the thing and read it and I made up my mind then and there that the President ought to have the conference with me. He had to know about Guam. I'd never had a chance to tell him anything

about Guam. (Of course he knew all about it anyhow, more than I did.) So I sat down and I wrote a letter to Doug McKay and told him what I was doing. I said that I'll get back in Washington on a certain day, which was about ten days hence. I said, "I think that I ought to have the conference with the President and tell him what he ought to know about Guam." I was naive enough to think he didn't know anything about Guam. And I said, "If you agree with me, I would appreciate it if you'd set up a conference with the President."



And I wrote that letter; in due course I arrived in Washington. I went directly to the office of the secretary. His secretary was a young lady who had got to know me because I'd seen her so many times. So as soon as she saw me she said, "Your conference with the President's all set."

I said, "When is it set for?"

She said, "Nine o'clock next Friday morning." Well, that was about two or three days hence.

I said, "Is the secretary going with me?"

"Oh, yes, he'll be with you. He'll go with you to the President's office."

And I said, "That's fine."

"Now," she says, "I think you better be in here about half past eight."

"Okay."

So I polished my shoes, got my hair cut, and made myself as good-looking as I could under the circumstances. And that morning I went up to the office, half past eight, and she told me the secretary would be in in a few minutes, so I sat down. Well, it came twenty minutes to nine and he wasn't in. Came quarter to nine and he wasn't in. So I said to her, "Does he know about this appointment?"

"Oh, yes, he'll be here, don't worry."

And about ten minutes to nine, in he walks. And Doug says, "Come on, Ford, let's go."

He goes by an underground from the secretary's office into the White House. I don't know how the Sam Hill he gets there, but he did anyway. Doesn't cross on the street. So we got there just exactly nine o'clock. And the lady said, "I'm sorry but you'll have to wait a few minutes because there's a gentleman in there talking with him--talking a bit more time than usual." Well, he was taking my time.

We waited a few minutes and who should come out of his



office but Dave Beck. Dave Beck's from Seattle, you know, and I knew Dave Beck. Been in his office, talked with him. And Dave was coming out. I thought to myself, "That's a heck of a guy to be taking my time." So we went into the President's office. He was seated at his desk and the moment I stepped in he got up from his desk, came around, and shook hands with me, told me to sit down. Doug sat down. And there was some secretary, who came in with us who took notes, one thing and another. So the three of us were in there with the President. We began to talk a little while about Guam and all of a sudden he got switched over to Pennsylvania about his farm, and he and Doug began to talk about the farm. I guess they spent ten minutes about the pigs he'd had and the cattle he had and what have you. And I was sitting there. Well, that was all right. But the meeting was only fifteen minutes. So when the fifteen minutes was up, why, I stood up, and "Oh," he says, "don't be in a hurry, don't be in a hurry." So he comes around to the front of his desk and he sits on the desk with his feet hanging over and wiggling his feet like this. And we began to talk about Guam again. And so we talked for a while and every now and then he'd break it off and talk about his sheep or cattle or something



with Doug. I guess I spent thirty, thirty-five minutes in there with him and then came away. But you know in that article, it mentioned the informality of a conference with the President, how he would get up and sit on his desk and wiggle his feet and be just as informal as could be. Now that's the way he was when I was in his office. Just like that.



MRS. ELVIDGE: And you know, at these conferences, especially at the dinners, we had to go in according to the way you're admitted to the Union. So of course all the New England states and their governors and wives would go filing in, and then along toward the end came Hawaii and Alaska and Puerto Rico, and little Guam was always the tail end of this long procession in these receptions. We got very well acquainted with the governor of Alaska and some of the other Possessions at the time, which were not states. And one time, in one of the receptions, Mrs. Eisenhower held onto my hand at the very end and she squeezed it and said, "I've been on Guam; I know what you're up against." So it became very personal and very nice.

SOAPES: What year was it that you left Guam?

ELVIDGE: 1956.

SOAPES: You decided you'd had enough? Wanted to get--

ELVIDGE: Well, I had a practice here in Seattle and I didn't want to lose it. Of course I'd left it in charge of my junior partners, but they were developing and it looked to me like they were going to run off with it. So I thought I better get back to resume the practice, which I did.



MRS. ELVIDGE: Well, Ford had been in practice here for nearly fifty years; he'd also been offered a judgeship in Honolulu and one in Juneau. I still have the gown I had made for that. But we decided we'd stay here, and we had personal matters that had to be attended to. Three and a half years, we could have been out there eight I guess. They had trouble from then on getting somebody out there. It's a different thing, Guam, from any other part of the world.

SOAPES: Well, thank you very much, Mr. and Mrs. Elvidge.