

*C.N.M.I. ARCHIVES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
FORMER MUNICIPALITY OF SAIPAN  
BUILDING, CHALAN KANOA  
VILLAGE*

*Interviewee  
Sister Remedio Castro*

*Interviewer  
Mr. Herbert S. Del Rosario*

*Date  
June 11, 1998*

*Place  
Sister Remedio's Convent*

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*Oral History Interview  
Sister Remedio Castro  
June 11, 1998  
(English Version)*

*Introduction: Hafa Adai, today is June 11, 1998 and it is a little pass Ten here on Saipan. I would like to take this opportunity to interview Sister Remedio with regards to her knowledge about the Village of Chalan Kanoa. Also, on what she remembered about the history of the two-story building, which houses the former Mayor of Saipan, the Saipan Congress and the Saipan Municipal Council.*

*I was asked by the Post Office Consultant to document any information about when the building was built, who build it, what offices were there and names of individuals who at one point in time used the building.*

*The Post Office has plans to demolish the present building in order for them to expand their present facilities.*

*Q: So, Sister Remedio, can you tell me the history of that building and to your knowledge, what was the building first used for and when?*

*A: The building was first used as a Church. When they were moved from Susupe to Chalan Kanoa, It was first thought that the Church was the most important. So, they used it as a Church and that was where people on island attended mass, and catechism classes. East of that building was the Convent where the priests were staying. Also, on that area was the*

*hospital and the office of the Mayor of Saipan. There were some elders who sew there or taught sewing. We the nuns were given a little piece of land a little bit to the South of that building.. The Old Nanyo Kohatsu Kaisha building was given to us while they built the present Sister Remedio Pre-School structure. That piece of property belonged to us. At the same time they were also building the Church, the present Chalan Kanoa Cathedral.*

*Q: In your recollection, about how many years was the old municipal building in Chalan Kanoa used as a church?*

*A: I believe since the late 40's. If I am not mistaken, I don't know whether it was during 1945, 1946 , when they started moving from Susupe to Chalan Kanoa. So from my recollection the construction of the Cathedral started in 1956.*

*Q: Then the place was used before the nineteen forties as a Church?*

*A: No, after the forties, the war took place in nineteen-forty four. During the war, if I am not mistaken, I am not very sure, because I don't really remember the year, but I think we only stayed two years in Susupe before we moved to Chalan Kanoa. So if I am not mistaken 1944 or 1946 was the year or maybe it was 1947 when the construction of the Cathedral started.*

*Q: Until the Church was completed?*

*A: When the present Cathedral was completed, the priests moved into their convent and the church was blessed.*

*Q: From your recollection, do you remember the names of those priests who once lived there at the Old Municipal Building.*

*A: Oh, during those times the Nuns, Mother Teresa, Mother Pia, Sister Angelica, Sister Joaquina, Mother Aurora and myself. Cause I was taking the nuns during the War. I was in charge of the priests and nuns in the jungle seeking refuge. For example we were hidden when they took us, we were either hidden under the trees or somewhere ..... The priests, at that time, Father Tardio, Father Tardio and Brother Henroqueta both were together during the war. Father Tardio then left Saipan. Father Arnold then came and replace Father Tardio. Then other priests started coming after Father Tardio and Brother Henroqueta.*

*Q: Okay, so they were staying east of the Old Municipal Building?*

*A: No, because to the east of the building is the road, then right next to the road is the convent for the priests. The other buildings were the municipal, the hospital, right where the U.S. Post Office was used by the elders who sew and next to it*

*Q: Then the two-story building is where the church was?*

A: *Yes it is.*

Q: *When the church moved, what offices moved into that building?*

A: *If I am not mistaken, when the church moved out, the hospital and like you mentioned earlier the Municipality of Saipan and also other activities of the government, until the Cathedral was completely finished.*

Q: *Do you remember which of the Mayors of Saipan used that building?*

A: *The First Mayor was Teacher Kili, Mr. Gregorio Sablan, then Mr. Juan Ada. Those were the ones I remember. The first few mayors.*

Q: *Oh, during that time when the Americans came, I remember that the Carolinian Affairs Office was also there.*

A: *Yes.*

Q: *The Congress too?*

A: *Yes.*

Q: *The Municipal Council too? Okay, this past year if I am not mistaken, our governor gave the Post Office to use that place. I have talked to several people about the decision to give the post office that place, the former Municipality of Saipan building. I know that a lot, such as the Covenant Negotiation which took place on the second floor of that building. That building has a history and a lot of significance and important events happened in that building. What do you think of the plan to demolish*

*that building? Do you favor that request or do you want to protect the building?*

*A: For myself, I wanted it if our government can only understand, that the building has an historical significance. It is good to preserve that building for us remember when we were taken from the war, when we were freed, then entered Susupe, then we were brought here. It was here where all the improvements in Chalan Kanoa started. So the place must be protected since it has historical significance for our people. The building's usage was for our religious purposes, then as far as I am concerned, the structure must be preserved due to its historical significance to our people. I know there are other places here on Saipan that can be..... I can continue to talk, however, our governor controls, however, with the blessings of the holy spirit, there decisions will be better... Because the holy spirit guides us in our decision making and the blessings of the holy spirit is very important my son.*

*Q: Madam, my next question for you is .....what one event do you remember the most that occurred in that area, the former mayor's office. What I am trying to say is that the building was once a church and during Christmas, the Chamorros and Carolinians will celebrate that event over there. Is there one name that you remember that plac*

A: *I truly remember Christmas since it was a beautiful celebration. It was also not that big. However when the people gathered it was always crowded. That was how it was, there were many good things that happened. Also for example, you and your peers were brought up through catechism about our religious beliefs. That is what I remembered the most, the teaching of our religious beliefs.*

Q: *Then the mass were celebrated on the first floor?*

A: *Yes, the bottom was where the masses were celebrated.*

Q: *During that time the entire people were attending mass in Chalan Kanoa?*

A: *All the people from Chalan Kanoa and also during that time the people were not staying in the village. Both the Carolinians and Chamorros were staying together. So that was where the church was, there was no church in Tanapag and San Roque Villages at that time. The people from San Roque have not returned to their village. But during that time the entire people of Saipan gathered in Chalan Kanoa for church services.*

Q: *Then you are telling me that, that was the first Church here on Saipan?*

A: *That was the first church here on Saipan. There was one in Susupe, but it was only a tent and then they move them to Chalan Kanoa because the one in Susupe was a very small church.*

Q: *Then the church in Chalan Kanoa was built before the one in Tanapag?*

A: *Yes, this was the first church built before the one in Tanapag. Then the second church that was built was the one in Tanapag. There was no church since the Japartese time. Only in Garapan and Tanapag. Then when the people were separated in Chalan Kanoa. The people who stayed in Tanapag were the ones who were originally from there. Then the people of Tanapag built a small church and then later built a bigger one.*

Q: *Okay, the last question Sister that I am going to ask you, do you want the building protected and not destroyed?*

A: *Yes.*

Q: *Then I gathered that you are supporting the idea of maintaining the building as a historical memories of our people?*

A: *Yes.*

Q: *Then that is all sister.*

A: *Thank you very much.*

Q: