

# Should the Organic Act be rewritten?

## Christina Illarimo

For Pacific Daily News

Some Guam residents are concerned that the Organic Act is out of date, according to an informal survey taken by the Pacific Daily News.

The act became law 50 years ago today, giving Guam residents a civil government and granting Chamorros U.S. citizenship.

Many residents said the congressional legislation should be updated.

"I think it should be rewritten to fit our times today in the 21st century," said Yigo resident Doriann Santos, a teacher at Guam High School. "It should fit the way we live today, not in the '50s."

Suzie Peredo, a real-estate agent from Barrigada, said the Organic Act should be revamped.

"I feel the Organic Act should be rewritten because there are many flaws," Peredo said. "What was implemented 50 years ago worked for the island then, but not for today."

Some Guam residents said that along with a revised Organic Act, the island needs a constitution.

"Guam should have its own constitution and be an integral part of the U.S.," said Navy Cmdr. Mike Dodge of Santa Rita. "Right now, the Organic Act is one way. Congress enacted it and Congress can repeal it. We need a say in our destiny."

Amy Martin of Yigo also said Guam should have its own



"I think so. They should take a look at that. It's been 50 years."

**Joseph Alcaivo**  
Yigo



"Not actually rewritten, but updated, to meet the needs of Guam's current society."

**Tony Yatar**  
Barrigada



"Yes, it needs to adapt to the new changes the island is facing."

**Ron Espina**  
Dededo



"Yes. I think Guam is ready for a constitution. Guam has changed quite a bit."

**Amy Martin**  
Yigo

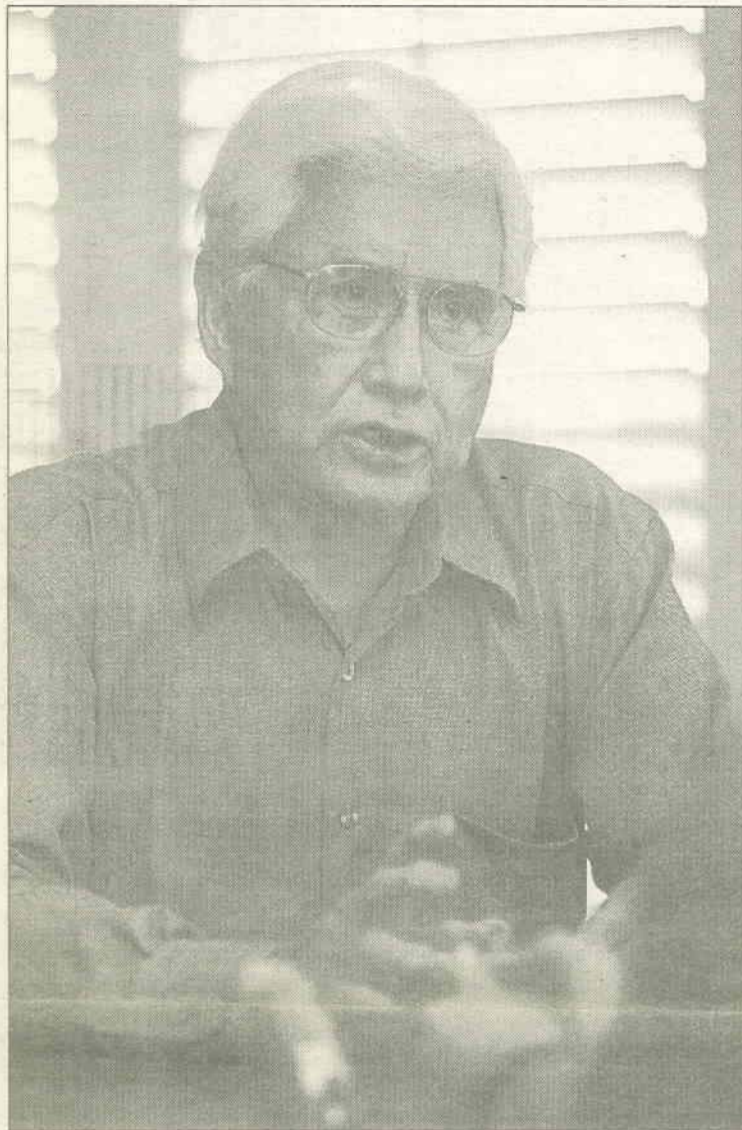
constitution.

"I think Guam is ready for a constitution," she said. "Guam has changed quite a bit."

Some said the Organic Act needs no changes. "I don't know much about it, but so far, it's been good," said Nelie Dizon of Mangilao. "So why fix it?"

# Act of defiance led to citizenship

## Guam Congress walkout woke world to Chamorros' plight



Ed Crisostomo/Pacific Daily News

**Witness:** Former Speaker Carlos Taitano talks about the origins of the Organic Act while at the Hilton yesterday. He was the only Chamorro present at the signing of the act, he said.

**By Victoria Leon Guerrero**  
For Pacific Daily News

More than 50 years ago, Carlos Taitano knew the "aristocratic" government on Guam had to come to an end.

Taitano, who was then a member of the Guam Congress, engineered and helped to publicize the Guam Congress Revolt of March 5, 1949. The revolt, a walkout by members of the congress's lower house, became a turning point in Guam's autonomy, and eventually led to the government the island has today.

The walkout helped to push forward the signing of Guam's Organic Act on Aug. 1, 1950.

Taitano and other island leaders will be honored at a 50th Anniversary Commemoration Ceremony Aug. 1 at the University of Guam field house. Organizers said the commemoration festivities are a celebration of the island's progress since President Harry S. Truman signed the Organic Act, giving the people of Guam U.S. citizenship and beginning a half-century of civil rule.

Fifty years ago, the Chamorro people had absolutely no control over the island, Taitano said, and now they can elect their own governor.

For more than 300 years, Guam was controlled by martial law. Military leaders from Spain, Japan and the United States dictated the governance of the island.

The United States gained control of Guam in 1898 and ruled the island until 1941, when the Japanese Imperial Army took over for more than two years during World War II.

### HISTORY

▲ The Organic Act is a form of constitution drafted by the United States Congress. Guam's Organic Act was signed into law Aug. 1, 1950 by President Harry S. Truman. The act gave the people of Guam U.S. citizenship and a bill of rights and laws, and created Guam's civil government.

The U.S. regained control in 1944.

"It was an autocracy within American democracy," Taitano said. Although Guam was a territory of the United States, Taitano said, it did not receive the same privileges as other territories.

The Chamorro people had no say in the government of their island. There was a Guam Congress, Taitano said, but it acted only as an advisory council to the naval governor, who made the island's laws.

Some of the laws included a ban on whistling, because it disturbed the governor's wife, and a limit on ringing church bells at certain times, because they bothered military personnel.

Also, the Chamorros were only educated up to the ninth grade.

"They were poorly educated, poorly trained and not U.S. citizens," Taitano said.

Taitano, who left the island to further his education in Hawaii, realized the poor treatment his people were receiving and wanted to make a difference. When he returned to Guam, he was elected into the Guam Congress and began his movement for freedom.

He said he recognized that in order for the island to take a stand, its people had to gain international attention.

On March 5, 1949, Taitano and other members of the congress's lower house took that stand, and began the end of a half-century struggle for U.S. citizenship.

Taitano told members of the Associated Press and United Press International of the walkout and, within 24 hours, news of the revolt spread like wildfire.

"The whole nation was aroused," Taitano said. "They compared the Guam revolt to the Boston Tea Party."

At the time, a cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union was developing and the strike became a diplomatic embarrassment for America, Taitano said.

Six months later, Truman replaced Guam's naval governor with a civilian governor, and the U.S. Congress began drafting the Organic Act.

"Although the Organic Act was an imperfect document, self-respect and dignity were given back to the people of Guam," Taitano said. "After 50 years of nothing, it was something."



# Island census nearing completion, officials say

**By Dionesis Tamondong**  
Pacific Daily News

The island population is just about counted.

Census officials are wrapping up their difficult task of roaming the streets, counting heads and gathering information from households.

"We are about 90 percent done with the total workload," said

Roland Villaverde, assistant manager of field operations. "Operations have been going smoothly."

Local census officials said they are not allowed to release any information from their findings until next year, after it is reviewed by mainland census officials and the federal government.

Villaverde said his staff is at the final stages of its fact-finding mis-

### FOR MORE INFO

▲ Call Guam Census 2000 at 648-2000.

sion.

About a hundred enumerators are still roaming the island tracking down residents who have not completed their census forms.

Inside the census headquarters in Tamuning, staffers are processing loads of data to be sent in August to the national processing center in Indiana.

The only problem his staff has encountered, Villaverde said, is adapting to new machines used to process the information. In general, local residents have been cooperative with visiting enumerators,

Villaverde said.

Every ten years, the Census Bureau counts the country's population.

Local residents stand to benefit from the census, because funding for federal programs — educational grants, welfare programs, and natural disaster assistance — is usually based on information gathered from the census.

## Pacific Daily News

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### Index

Classifieds . . . . .40

Comics/Horoscope . . . . .38

Editorials/letters . . . . .22, 23

Lifestyle . . . . .24

Movies/TV . . . . .35

Observation post . . . . .36

Philippines/Pacific . . . . .11

Sports . . . . .50

Weather . . . . .6

World/Nation . . . . .14

### Obituaries, rosaries

Index to advertisements

### Message of appreciation

▲ Edward J. Taijeron Garrido 30

▲ Ana San Miguel Elardo .31

### Death notices

▲ Pedro S.A. Mendiola . . .30

▲ Francisca C. Campen . .31

### Rosaries

▲ Leo P. & Ernesto Ceraos .31

▲ Pedro & Remedios Salas 31

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## NEWS

### arrest man bumping incident

Arrested Seich Seichiro of Piti do for allegedly 34-year-old Japanese tourist two days ago, said Fernandez. Guam Police spokesman. The arrested July 30 at about 10 p.m. in Tumon as the victim and were walking near Tumon Beach and Ypao Beach when allegedly bumped into a woman, who felt a sharp pain in her back and saw she had a bruise. Fernandez said. Piti do near the Archbishop Flores monument in Piti said he stabbed the woman because he was drunk, said. The woman was taken to Guam Memorial Hospital for treatment, he said. Pison was charged with possession of a weapon in the commission of a felony, attempted aggravated assault. He was arrested and confined, Fernandez said.

### power outage set in Piti

Power Authority has a power outage in Asan tomorrow from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. affecting the 7-Eleven store in Piti village and the area. There also will be interruptions of power from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. affecting the area of Route 1 in Asan and Piti JJ Market. Crews are working on the power lines.

### Organic Act fete in Piti

The Piti Police Department will hold an identification section from 1 to 2:30 p.m. in Piti in observance of the Organic Act of Guam, said Sgt. Ray. The Piti Police Department is sponsoring the event.

Pacific Daily News

### Organic Act celebration signing open, what's not today

- Schools: closed.
- All post office branches: open.
- Government of Guam offices: open.
- Bank: open.
- Retail shops and department stores: open.
- Pacific Daily News: open.
- Guam Mass Transit Authority operations: regular schedule.

### Set the record

about accuracy. If you want to clear the record, call Pacific Daily News at 475-414.

# Organic Act symposium

## Former leaders, schoolchildren discuss impact of document

By Theresa Merto

Pacific Daily News

Elyse Bais thinks a lot about the right to vote — something she'll be able to do in a mere 11 years.

The 7-year-old was one of the winners of the "Organic Act, Pride in Our Progress" essay contest. Yesterday, she read her winning entry in front of dozens of people who gathered at a conference on the Organic Act.

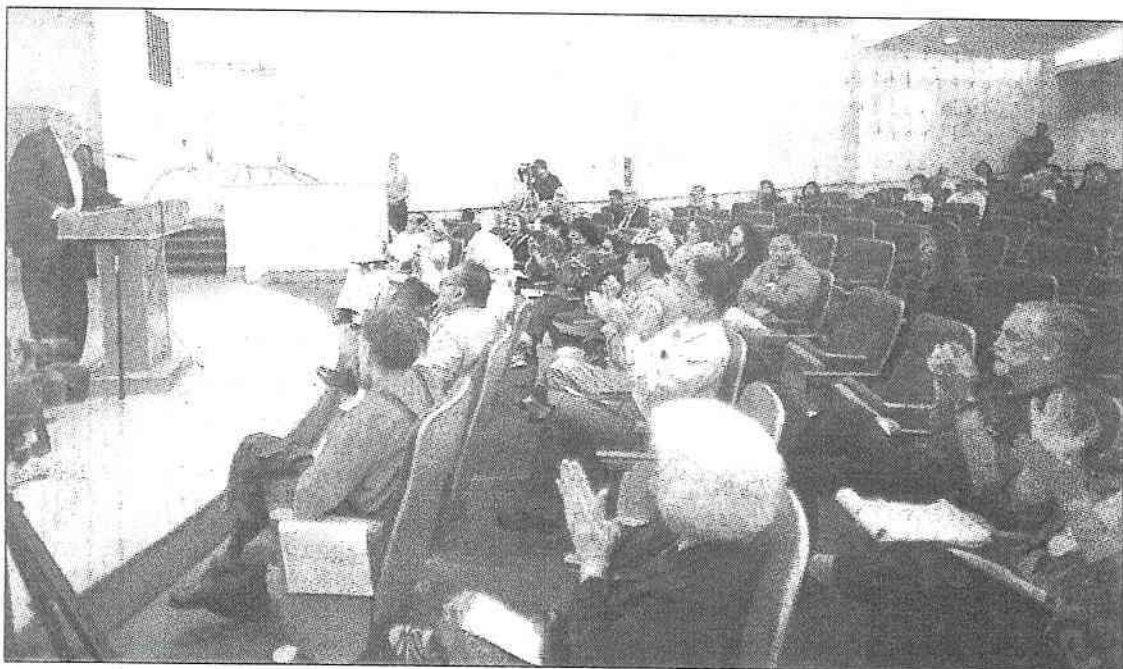
"The people of Guam have come a long way because of the Organic Act of Guam. Today, I see signs on the roadsides asking us to vote for our own governor, congressman, and senators," Bais said in her essay. "We have a choice on who should win and that's good, because I like some of them."

The conference was held at the University of Guam's College of Arts and Sciences lecture hall. Guest speakers discussed the Organic Act and how it came to be.

"We wanted to hold a serious, academic symposium on the subject. This gives the people a chance to reflect on history," said Tyrone Taitano, executive director of the Organic Act Task Force. "The conference was part of a series of events leading to commemorating and celebrating 50 years of progress on island."

The conference was hosted by the Organic Act Task Force and the University of Guam. Several dignitaries, on island to take part in the commemoration of the act, were guest speakers at the conference.

Former Speaker Carlos Taitano told of a walkout by members of Guam Congress' lower house, which helped push forward the signing of the Organic Act Aug. 1, 1950.



R. D. Golding/For Pacific Daily News

**Academic conference:** Former Guam Gov. Carlton Skinner receives a round of applause during his speech at a conference yesterday on the Organic Act. The symposium was held in the College of Arts and Sciences lecture hall at the University of Guam.

"The people of Guam have come a long way because of the Organic Act of Guam."

Elyse Bais  
essay winner

ing of the Organic Act Aug. 1, 1950.

Also at the presentation was former Gov. Bill Daniels, invited to speak by master of ceremonies Ron McNinch, a professor at the university. Daniels gave his recollections of life on Guam.

"It is a very sentimental journey to come back to Guam," Daniels said. "I love Guam, and I love the people."

Tanisha Ann Franquez, who graduated from George Washington High School this year, won the essay contest for the secondary level.

el.

"This is the first essay contest I have ever won; I have entered many," Franquez said with a smile. She said that she touched on several topics in her essay, including U.S. citizenship and the right to vote.

"Although Guamanians do not vote for the President of the United States of America, they have the chance to make an effort and difference to choose leaders that will lead the island into a prosperous and determined new era," Franquez said in her essay. "This opportunity gives

### ORGANIC ACT

▲ The Organic Act of Guam was drafted by the United States Congress and signed into law Aug. 1, 1950, by President Harry S. Truman. The act gave the people of Guam U.S. citizenship and a bill of rights and laws, and created a civil government.

the people of the island a more prestigious outlook on their island, knowing that their signature has made a difference in the future of the island."

Franquez said she was honored to be a part of the conference.

"It is a pleasure to be in this lecture hall and meet all these people who have made a difference," Franquez said.

## 1950s prices, displays, music at field house

By Theresa Merto

Pacific Daily News

Guam will blast to the past today.

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Organic Act of Guam, a 1950s party will be held at 3:30 p.m. today at the University of Guam field house.

The Organic Act of Guam was drafted by the United States Congress, and signed into law Aug. 1, 1950. It sets the framework for laws and government on Guam.

At the celebration, there will be hot dogs for 10 cents and soda for 5 cents, said Tyrone Taitano, executive director, Organic Act Task Force.

He said the task force was able to use 1950s prices because of business donations. All the proceeds of the celebration will go to the Alee Shelter for abused children, Taitano said.

### ORGANIC ACT CELEBRATION

▲ A 50s-style party will be held today at 3:30 p.m. at the University of Guam field house. There will be 1950s prices for food, including hot dogs for 10 cents and soda for 5 cents.

▲ A commemoration ceremony will follow at 6:30 p.m. at the field house. Admission is free.

Source: Tyrone Taitano, executive director, Organic Act Task Force.

In addition to food booths, there will be a variety of displays at the event.

"There will be a display of vintage cars and old juke boxes," said Taitano. "There will also be a display by the Guam Museum, such as documents and pictures bearing on the last 50 years."

A commemorative ceremony will be held 6:30 p.m. at the same location.

"There will be speeches by the governor and the former governors, lots of music, dancing and a video presentation," Taitano said.

Taitano added that there also will be a big musical finale.

"It is open to the public and admission is free," Taitano said. "It will be good for the whole family." James Bermudes, 21, of Malojloj, and Robert Castaneda, 18,



of Santa Rita volunteered their time to prepare for today's festivities.

"We've been basically cleaning up the field house, so it is all good to go for the celebration," Bermudes said.

He said he was looking forward to meeting the former governors and being able to buy a hot dog for 10 cents.

"I'm glad I volunteered my time for this historic event," Bermudes said. "It's going to be a lot of fun."