

Note from Cdr Dick Wytttenbach, OMSN
March 18, 1976

The description below was written by Ruth Gilliam who lives on Guam. It is, to me, a remarkable insight into the way Government and Politics work on Guam. It completely conforms to my experiences and observations of the Guamanian-Chamorro political scene. I believe that it is also valid for the Northern Marianas and may therefore be of interest to you.

Amb *has ey* de Graffenried
Scheile
✓ Trent Crump
Loftus Wytt^enbach

Government and Politics

The seat of government is in Agana where the first elected Governor, Carlos G. Camacho, presides over an executive branch. There are legislative and judicial branches patterned after the American system.

But Guam government and politics have a special sort of Guamanian flavor which surprises the uninitiated. There are the ritual chains of command and "channels" of process, but these do not work nearly so effectively and efficiently as does the system of favor-granting and manipulation hidden behind ostensible government processes. Relatives, compadres, and friends are valued more highly in Guam than are regulations and bureaucratic procedures. The unknowing, who judge the government on the basis of its carrying out its functions according to conventional form, see it as inefficient; whereas, it is highly efficient to one within the "system".

Politics are taken very seriously on Guam. A person's political affiliation is practically as important as his own name. Before an election there is vigorous campaigning with a grassroots touch that reaches down to the level of the individual home. Candidates and their campaign workers go from house to house asking for support. In addition they hold "pocket meetings" – small village meetings in the evening where candidates are introduced and issues are discussed.

Political motivations move as a force in Guam which must be recognized and contended with by those who live and work there. Positions of employment, improvement projects, monetary appropriations and expenditures may all fall under the dictates of political pressure. Once this is understood by the newcomer, he may begin to deal with the "system" more intelligently and predict its movements more accurately.

Exerpt from "A Pictorial of Guam."