



FELICIDAD TAMAN OGUMORO
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATOR
AND BUSINESSWOMAN

Felicidad T. Ogumoro was honored earlier this year as one of the "Outstanding Young Women of America" for 1985. She is one of two local women to achieve this distinction since the Northern Marianas became a Commonwealth of the United States in 1978.

The honor recognizes Ms. Ogumoro's contributions to her profession and to the community, especially in assisting the less fortunate and in helping women to become full and equal partners in the development of the Northern Marianas.

Born on Saipan in 1949, Felicidad is the eldest of eight children of Daniel R. and Estefania Taman Ogumoro. She reached school age just as the U. S. Naval Administration of Saipan was ending and received her primary and high school education at Mt. Carmel School, the island's only parochial school. She graduated as valedictorian in 1968.

At that time, young women in the Mariana Islands were expected, once they reached the age of 16, either to get married or stay at home and help the family. Further education was usually not an option. But with the encouragement of her parents, Felicidad broke with tradition and a year after her graduation enrolled in Saint Mary College in Kansas on a Congress of Micronesia scholarship. In 1973, Ms. Ogumoro graduated from St. Mary's with a B.A. in sociology and was honored by being listed in Who's Who Among Students in American Universities.

Ms. Ogumoro returned to Saipan just as the first cracks were appearing in the concept of a single post-U. S. Trusteeship entity for the Micronesian islands. As president of the Saipan Women's Association, she became active in community affairs, especially in the campaign to oppose certain terms of the Commonwealth Covenant with the United States which was being negotiated at that time between the Northern Marianas and the United States.

In 1977, Ms. Ogumoro was elected as one of the first two women to the newly formed Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature and began her first term in January, 1978. She was chosen by her colleagues as

Chairperson of the House Committee on Health, Education and Welfare and Vice Chairperson of the Appropriations Committee, positions she held until the end of her second term in 1981.

After her stint with the Legislature, Ms. Ogumoro and her husband, Francisco T. Uludong, organized Western Pacific Associates, Micronesia's first locally owned public relations and business consulting firm.

In August, 1982, she took a job as a counselor at the Northern Mariana Islands Catholic Social Services (CSS), a private non-profit organization. In 1984, she became the administrator, and under her leadership CSS has grown into the largest private social services organization not only in the Northern Marianas but in Micronesia as well.

CSS provides marriage and family counseling, assistance for the unemployed, shelter for abused spouses, emergency food and clothing supplies, employment referral assistance, and alcoholic rehabilitation services. In addition, the organization also handles youth programs such as tutoring for students with academic problems, leadership development programs, and sports and recreation programs.

In 1985, CSS was designated as the state agency in the Northern Marianas for implementing three federal programs for the disabled. CSS assists developmentally disabled persons, client and client applicants of vocational rehabilitation and the mentally ill. "We don't provide services for these persons directly," Ms. Ogumoro says, "but we make sure that they receive what they're entitled to from service providers. We are the advocates of the handicapped and the disabled." As a result of CSS work, more local families with "disabled" members are "coming out." A recent CSS survey shows that there are at least 500 "disabled" persons in the Northern Marianas, a very high figure in a resident population of 18,000. Ms. Ogumoro expresses concern that rapid social and economic changes are the cause of the increase in disabilities among the local population.

Through her work and her personal lifestyle, Felicidad Ogumoro has been instrumental in changing the concept of the traditional roles of men and women in Micronesian society. In addition to her full-time job at CSS, Ms. Ogumoro has become deeply involved in private enterprise. She believes that educated Pacific Islanders made a serious mistake in the 1960s and '70s in becoming involved in government and politics, thereby allowing foreigners to take over the private sectors of the islands.

Following her beliefs, Ms. Ogumoro and her husband in 1985 borrowed \$200,000 from the Northern Marianas Government to publish the "Pacific World Directory," the first Pacific-wide information system owned and managed by Pacific Islanders. Ms. Ogumoro serves as Assistant Publisher and Business Manager while her husband, a journalist with a journalism degree from the University of Hawaii, is the publication's publisher and editor. Scheduled to be released in late 1986, the directory covers all 21 Pacific island countries and territories, and includes general and investment information, and listings of key government agencies and

businesses throughout the Pacific island region. Ms. Ogumoro hopes the directory will be the base for launching other information-related businesses that sell information about the Pacific island countries and peoples.