

AUG 1, 2002

ADDRESS: Traditional Leaders of Pohnpei
Governor Johnny David
Lt. Governor Jack Yakana
Members of the Pohnpei State Legislature
FSM Vice President Ridley Killion
and the Diplomatic Corps on Pohnpei
Athletes, Coaches, Officials and Fans

Micronesian Games Speech by Bill Sakovich

The 1st Micronesian Olympics, as they were first called, was held in July 1969 on Saipan without facilities as we have today. They happened as a result of the foresight of the 2nd and 3rd Congress of Micronesia to help the youth of Micronesia. Felix Rabauliman, Elias Okamura and Al Snyder spearheaded that committee and the Games were held.

The Games were to be held every 3 years, but for various reasons did not, and, in 1988, Ed Manibusan, Frank Rosario, Bob Coldeen and myself met to try and re-establish them. In 1990, with the support of Mobil Oil, DFS, Shimizu Corp. and the Northern Marianas Government, the 2nd Micronesian Games became a reality, and today, we are at the closing of the 5th Micronesian Games and looking forward to the next Games in Yap in 2006, who won a tough bid against the Marshall Islands.

In the 1969 Micronesian Olympics, Kiribati, Guam and Nauru did not take part, but organizers felt in order to bring the entire region together, they too should be included and now 10 island nations compete in these quadrennial multi-sport event.

I was not involved in the 1969 Games, but became involved with the 1975 Micronesian Team to the South Pacific Games on Guam by coaching the swim team. My real interest began here and from that point, I have

been involved with every Micronesian and South Pacific Games since, and have had the pleasure to witness the development of Sport throughout Micronesia. I feel these Games are very important to all the islands, and to me, these Games are really the only event that brings all the Micronesian Islands together for Friendship and Competition, and I truly feel this is happening, and I hope it continues. And, I thank all of you for making the Games a success. If not for YOU, there would be no Games.

There has been a tremendous change in sport development and facilities since 1969, from virtually no "international " standard facilities in any of the islands, to international facilities in most of the islands as seen here today.

Also, with some of the islands becoming National Olympic Committees, there are opportunities to participate in the Olympics. All of us are now sending athletes to World and Regional competitions. Annually, our athletes have a goal to shoot for, starting with the FSM Games, the Micronesian Games, the South Pacific Games and the Olympics. I would go as far as saying that some day one of our athletes will win an Olympic medal, and, it will take a lot of dedication and hard work. Many of you have had the opportunity to train outside of your respective islands, and know it is different, and tougher. YOU MUST bring that knowledge back to your islands, and in that way, we here at home can become more competitive abroad.

As President of the Micronesian Games Council since 1990, I have had to work without a budget, alot came from myself personally, some funds were generated from the Games held in Saipan, and Continental Airlines and Mobil have played a big role, along with your islands sporting organizations.

thanks to efforts by Michael Grandinetti at UMOT, our funding chairman,

I have spent much of my time corresponding with many of you, and I only hope the future will bring specific funding to assist the Micronesian Games Council, to improve on what we have established. This year the

Oceania National Olympic Committee through Dr. Robin Mitchell, IOC member from Fiji, provided some funds to Pohnpei State to host the Games, and hopefully this will continue.

I have made numerous contacts, to bring Elite athletes, Coaches, and Professional Players to the Northern Marianas and some through the Micronesian Islands such as the Olympic Swimmer Chad Carvin, the Harlem Ambassadors and two Track Coaches in the late 80's. All have commented what a great time that had, and that is Thanks to YOU! I believe all visits were very worthwhile and I hope we can have them continue.

It is very encouraging to see many former athletes taking over the coaching duties and other administrative positions. And I would like to Thank the International Federation's, who have played major roles in our Games, and recently, ONOC.

In closing, I would truly like to thank each of you for your support during my tenure as President of the Micronesian Games Council, especially the Government leaders who have always gone out of their way to accommodate me on my visits, and my fellow Council Members who have worked with and supported me in promoting these Games. Thank you athletes, coaches and members of your sports committees, for all for your support. I only hope I can continue to help and be part of these Games in the future. Thank you always, to the Sponsors, who have made these Games possible.

I would also like to introduce the new Micronesian Games Council Officers for the next four years, Bill Keldermans as President, Shelten Neth, Pohnpei, as Secretary General, and Ken Kramer from the Marshalls as Treasurer.

And finally, I would personally like to thank Governor Johnny David, and Lt. Governor Jack Yakana for taking on the responsibility of seeing these

Games through, and Bob Spegal, Jim Tobin and all the committees who pulled together to make the 5th Micronesian Games one of the best Games.

Good Luck to Governor Vincent Figir and Yap State, your next host for the 6th Mcironesian Games in 2006, and thankyou Marshall Islands for submitting an excellent bid.

Thankyou and Good-Bye