

INTERVIEW OF ABED E. YOUNIS

by Howard P. Willens and Deanne C. Siemer

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- Willens: Abed E. Younis is the editor and publisher of the *Marianas Variety*, the leading newspaper in this part of the world. He has kindly agreed to be interviewed for our project. Mr. Younis, thank you very much for being available today. Can we begin by asking when you were born?
- Younis: I was born on April 29, 1936.
- Willens: And where were you born?
- Younis: I was born in Ara village in Israel.
- Willens: And how long did you live there?
- Younis: I lived there in Israel for 34 years.
- Willens: When did you leave?
- Younis: I left Israel in June 1970.
- Willens: Where were you educated?
- Younis: I was educated in Ara village for most of my elementary school. For high school I moved to Haifa City, and later on I moved to Jerusalem for higher education.
- Willens: Where did you go to school in Jerusalem?
- Younis: I went to Bet Salel Academy of Arts and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- Willens: Did your parents live in Israel?
- Younis: My parents lived there and my family had been living there hundreds of years. They are a big clan. Younis is the father of the whole clan. We estimated about 150 years ago, the clan came to that area and established the residency which today is Ara village.
- Siemer: What is it near?
- Younis: It is in the central part of Israel.
- Siemer: Is it close to the ocean?
- Younis: Not really. It's between the ocean and between the southern part of the country or the eastern part of the country.
- Willens: How far is it from Jerusalem?
- Younis: About two hundred some kilometers. From Tel Aviv it is about 100 or 90 some kilometers. Haifa is about 80 or something kilometers. So it is sort of central.
- Willens: So it's southeast of Haifa but a little bit northwest of Jerusalem?
- Younis: Sort of, yes.
- Willens: You mentioned that someone in the family more than 150 years ago moved to Israel.
- Younis: Younis himself. Younis is the father of the family which is named under his title. He originally came from somewhere from the south, they believe, and he settled in that valley.

From there he established two villages and he occupied the whole area of land around there.

Willens: How do you spell the names of those villages?

Younis: It's Ara and the other village is Arara.

Willens: What did you study in college?

Younis: Well it was an academy. After high school, you either go to an academy and you will be in a particular field, or you have vocational education in Israel. So in my case, I went to the academy and I took classes with the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In the academy I studied graphic arts and fine arts. That's where I graduated.

Willens: What was your first job after you completed your education?

Younis: I worked on my own. I opened my own small graphic arts shop.

Willens: So, you went into graphic arts immediately after the academy?

Younis: Yes, for a short time until the National Television Station of Israel was newly reopened there in Jerusalem. At that time they were looking for people with talent, ability, language, and I was selected to be a dual language employee, Hebrew and Arabic. I write both, I design both, I compose both, and that's my specialty.

Willens: Was your education in both languages?

Younis: Yes.

Willens: You worked for the National Television Station?

Younis: I worked for the National Television Station for about three and a half years.

Siemer: What years were those?

Younis: That was right after the war, I believe, 1967, 1968, 1969 and 1970.

Willens: What did you do then?

Younis: After that, that's the time that I left Israel. In 1970 I left Israel.

Willens: What prompted you to leave?

Younis: Primarily it was a sort of a scholarship, cultural scholarship, between Japan and Israel, to send students who had a specialty in certain fields. At the National Television Station I was doing animation and children's programs. For me, it was an opportunity to go and learn how Japanese culture and Japanese art impacts designs and programs in television.

Siemer: Where did you go?

Younis: That's when I came to Japan.

Siemer: Where in Japan?

Younis: Partially in Osaka and another part was in Tokyo.

Siemer: In 1971?

Younis: 1970-1971.

Siemer: What kind of a program were you in there?

Younis: I visited universities and I worked with some educators in the field of graphics. I lived with a family and tried to learn the culture, habits and the system of life and so on.

- Siemer: Did you speak any Japanese at the time?
- Younis: I did learn Japanese. Of course in Japan if you have to communicate, normally they want you to teach them English and you want to learn Japanese. So it's a struggle. But I did learn Japanese. I spoke Japanese for a while, but I didn't continue to practice it that much. I do understand it.
- Willens: At what point of your life did you learn English?
- Younis: Since my elementary school. In those years, we were British colony. It was Palestine at that time before the war, 1946, 1947, and the existence of Israel. In those years, the English was the secondary language to Arabic. That basically was how I studied English. When Israel came into existence, we carried on most of the system. English was pretty well spoken in Israel among my brothers and other people in the village.
- Willens: After the year in Japan, what did you do?
- Younis: I was supposed to change my status to stay in Japan and not to go back to Israel. I was going to work for a company, to do some art work and some other animation work. So they agreed to send me to Guam because this is the closest destination where I can reenter Japan in a different status as a working man, not as a visiting student.
- Willens: So you came to Guam?
- Younis: I came to Guam, and I stayed in Guam a couple of months until September 1971. I came to Guam I believe in either July or August. I was about two months or maybe less in Guam. Then I realized I had to leave because the company failed to get the contracts and awards. My U.S. visa was expiring at that time. I was told in Guam it's better to go to Saipan and change your status, reenter Guam, and then get a new visa. In Guam I worked for an advertising agency, and I helped them to develop some art work and some small cultural pamphlet on Guam, until my passport came back. Then I came to Saipan, and here I am.
- Willens: Did you have a job when you came to Saipan?
- Younis: No, I didn't have a job.
- Willens: What did you do then?
- Younis: It's a real unique thing about coming to Saipan. When I went to Guam, I lived in Mariso, southern part of Guam. I lived there because I wanted to know about Chamorros. At that time I didn't know anything about Chamorros and I was not familiar with much about the Trust Territory. I knew it was a United Nations trust. That's what I remember from Israel in history. So, at that time, when I lived with the Chamorros in Mariso, I was fascinated with the culture. It was close to me, in feeling. We are pretty familiar with the Spanish culture really and we are very close in the Middle East. They have the same habits as we have. Here, I am finding some people in the same ways, close. When I came to Saipan I lived here in Chalan Kanoa. I stayed in a small tiny apartment. And suddenly I found myself among a lot of friends, Chamorros, and I was very welcomed and very pleased and becoming good friends. And they start looking for a job for me to stay, so I would not leave the island. I was supposed to be here five days. All my friends, they went everywhere, to publications, to the education department, all kinds of things. They said you can stay here and you can work here. You can be our friend. We want to learn a lot of things from you, so stay with us. So, I decided to open the YSR Studio. I started doing graphics.
- Willens: You opened up your own business?

- Younis: Yes. Then I met my wife and got married and stayed.
- Siemer: What was her maiden name?
- Younis: Her name is Maria Paz Castro. Her middle name is Tudela. Maria Paz is her first name, Tudela Castro.
- Willens: Do you have children?
- Younis: I have six children. Three boys, three girls.
- Siemer: How big was YSR Studios when you started it?
- Younis: It was only one person.
- Siemer: Was it located in the same place that it is now?
- Younis: No. First I started in Susupe, on the second floor where Jesus Borja's parents lived. I rented a small place there on the second floor, and I started doing art work for the locally-owned newspaper. It used to be the *Marianas Star*. It was operated by Mike Malone and Gene Peters. Both of them were in the Peace Corps. Gene Peters was a teacher here, and Mike Malone was a Peace Corps in the Marshalls and moved here. They put together a newspaper. At the time I was doing some art work for them.
- Willens: How often did they publish that?
- Younis: It was a weekly. And at the same time I was doing a lot of signs and logo designs. The Joeten Enterprises logo today, that's my art work. The Hafa Adai logo, that's my art work. And many others, insurance companies and so forth.
- Willens: Was anyone else on the island doing that kind of work at the time?
- Younis: No. Later on I learned about Doug Rankin. He used to be working for the Education Department, and he was doing some sort of art work, but it's not really sophisticated graphics.
- Willens: How did you happen to move from the graphics work then into publishing a paper?
- Younis: As I mentioned, Gene Peters and Mike Malone operated the newspaper, but financially it was not doing very well. And they decided to go apart. They were trying to do something about looking for somebody [to take it over]. I was told that he contacted Doug Rankin and it didn't work out. So they came and asked me to take over the newspaper. But I said, "There is nothing. What do you want me to take on?" They said, "You go ahead and you own it, you operate it." And, it actually was only one table, one typewriter, one cabinet, and a lot of papers, and that's all. And I believe most of that material was property of the Peace Corps somehow.
- Siemer: Where was it printed back in those days?
- Younis: The printing, at that time, I believe that was one of the main reasons they had financial problems. They asked Joeten's, which was Joe Screen at that time, to buy them a small tiny press. The press is a table top AB Dick machine. It's just a small box, maybe one and half feet square. But it can print.
- Willens: Did they buy that?
- Younis: Well, they bought that, but they didn't find anybody to operate it. They couldn't manage things properly. They left it. The paper was closed about maybe three months when I came in. I remember in March, that's the first time I went there. I called Gene Peters to come in and give me a hand, because I didn't know how to write good English. I didn't

know how to do the actual work as a journalist. I can do the art work and take care of the printing because I learned that in school as part of my graphic arts—in theory of course not in practical terms. So Gene said okay, I'll go write stories and you take care of the rest, and that's where we started. We published weekly. We printed an average of 500 copies or less. It was a generous policy with the Trust Territory that, to promote communication, they would assist local people who want to develop such an area. So I used to go every Thursday to the Trust Territory Office to do my duplication and plates. I stayed there almost half night until they do everything for me. I came back and put them in machine and operate the next day.

Siemer: So you published on Fridays?

Younis: Yes.

Willens: Did you change the name at that time?

Younis: I originally picked the name, *Marianas Variety*. It came from an idea back in Guam where I was helping with advertising. They wanted to start, as I told you, a cultural pamphlet or a magazine. They did start a small thing and they called it the *Guam Variety*. But it's kind of a cultural piece. It's not really news. They had religious things, poems, and all kinds of things. So, it stayed in my mind and when I got some pressure to take over the printing here, I tell them okay, fine, I'll do it. Then I just named it *Marianas Variety*.

Siemer: When was that?

Younis: 1972.

Willens: The first issue came out when?

Younis: March 16. It is now 25th anniversary this March [1997].

Willens: Are you going to celebrate it in any particular way?

Younis: Yes, I'm going to celebrate.

Willens: The Trust Territory government at the time did have some kind of a publications department putting out a weekly or a monthly magazine.

Younis: Yes, they used to have two things. One was a newsletter, and the other one was a monthly report or magazine. It was a review of the activity of the Trust Territory and the High Commissioner and whatever the Administration was doing.

Willens: They had a Micronesian News Service, did they not?

Younis: That's what it was called. The Micronesian News Service was the entity responsible for printing those two publications.

Willens: Was there anyone trying to cover local matters?

Younis: There was not really much covering of any local activity. As I said, it's just mainly focused on the [TTPI] Administration. They had offices all over Micronesia. So they had reports from the Marshalls, Truk, Ponape, Saipan, Palau, and so on.

Willens: Did you get some initial support from businesses that wanted to advertise in the paper?

Younis: It was the encouraging factor really. A few of the businesses did support us. The main business was J.C. Tenorio Enterprises. Joeten at that time was still a small store but pretty active. He was the main advertiser, the main backer, and had ads every week.

Siemer: So he would advertise his weekend specials?

- Younis: Yes, he did. He used to advertise their own weekend specials and so on. After that we went to Townhouse, and they advertised. After that, Borja and Villagomez and so on.
- Willens: Did the advertising volume then increase steadily?
- Younis: It was increasing, yes. For the first stage, the first year, it was about steady. At that time, I had a fellow named Victor Pangelinan. He was in the Navy. I believe he came after the Vietnam War. He said he read English and he spoke English perfectly, and he can write. And I hired him. At that time, Gene Peters was moving away. So that gave the local image and gave a lot of advertisers some sort of an understanding. And the other factor is the fact that the *Marianas Variety* never failed to exist. It was published every week. Sometimes late, but it doesn't matter.
- Willens: Did you charge initially for the *Variety*?
- Younis: Yes, we used to charge five cents.
- Willens: You started out at five cents.
- Younis: That's all, five cents. And it used to be sort of loose sheets stapled.
- Willens: Just to give us an overview, when did it become published more often than once a week?
- Younis: It was in 1983.
- Willens: Then it was published how many times?
- Younis: Twice a week.
- Willens: Then what?
- Younis: And after that we moved to five days a week, about 10 years ago.
- Willens: And the price increased from five cents an issue?
- Younis: It went up from five cents to 15 cents to 25 cents to 50 cents.
- Siemer: How long did Victor Pangelinan stay with you?
- Younis: He didn't stay that long. He stayed about six to eight months. At that time, in 1972, he was covering the local elections and was interviewing people like Eddie Pangelinan and Felipe Atalig.
- Siemer: Oscar Rasa?
- Younis: Oscar Rasa, Pete Tenorio, and Ed Pangelinan campaigning for Congress at that time.
- Siemer: Did local advertisers come to you to do their ads?
- Younis: At that time I was doing a lot of photography [for the paper]. When the advertising was coming in, most of that I had to do by hand.
- Willens: You were then not only trying to publish it but you were an artist and you were also a photographer.
- Younis: I used to be a reporter also. I used to do the lettering by hand, sometimes the heading, rubbing, the letterset. And I used to personally hand carry the paper to the Trust Territory to help them to develop the plates and the film, bring it back, and print all night. I was optimistic. It was a one-man operation for many years.
- Siemer: When did you get your next printing press?
- Younis: It was 1974 when I moved from Chalan Kanoa to Oleai.

- Siemer: How long did you stay in Oleai?
- Younis: I stayed from 1974 until 1981, I believe, when I moved to Garapan.
- Siemer: And you moved the studio to Garapan as well?
- Younis: I moved the studio to Garapan.
- Willens: When you began the paper, did you also rely on the standard press services, the UPI and AP, to provide information?
- Younis: In the 1970s, no. I was hoping somehow I can get some information from off-island. But the intention was really to keep it as a mainly local newspaper. That was my whole intention. That was the force which was behind me—to keep it as a local newspaper, not to grow bigger, more than that. I had a lot of contributors. One was the father of Vic Pangelinan, Mr. John Pangelinan, and we used to nickname him Walkie Talkie, because he all the time talks. John Pangelinan, the old man, is a good writer. He used to write a column for the newspaper which was called “Lumog.” Lumog in Chamorro is the word for storm. I call it the cyclone. That’s lumog—the pounding storm. He used to be critical of all kind of things.
- Willens: At the time you began in March of 1972, was there any local competition in the business?
- Younis: There was no local competition. When I started, it had been closed since November, something like that.
- Willens: When did the next local newspaper develop in Saipan?
- Younis: It was I believe in 1975. Oscar Rasa had an intent to start a newspaper, but was it was only 8 1/2 by 14 size of a sheet of newspaper. He called it the Free Press.
- Siemer: That was during the campaign with respect to the approval of the Covenant?
- Younis: Yes, the Covenant campaign.
- Siemer: He and Joe Mafnas used that to publicize their arguments.
- Younis: Yes. It was a personal interest. I would not call it really a newspaper. It did not depend on collecting information and going out to see what’s happening at a public event and so on.
- Willens: What kind of local coverage was the *Pacific Daily News* providing with respect to affairs in the Northern Mariana Islands at the time?
- Younis: Not much really. Not much at the time I started [in 1972]. But they did come in 1973. They started a local paper that used to be called *Dateline*. They were required to have a license. There was a hearing and I was supposed to testify. I objected and said we should not have any other publication because we already have a newspaper and I would like to have the only local newspaper. We had the *Pacific Daily News* at that time as well. They were covering some stories here and there, but not in full until they came up with the *Dateline*. It survived for a while, but they did not get the support, advertising, distribution, leadership.
- Willens: Did they get a permit?
- Younis: I think finally they got the permit.
- Willens: But even with the permit, they could not survive.
- Younis: They did not survive.

- Siemer: What was the next competitor?
- Younis: Vic Pangelinan went ahead with Marianas Printing. At that time, this was new, the second printing shop locally owned by Tony Camacho, who was working for the Trust Territory as a printer. He opened a print shop and Vic Pangelinan thought that he was capable of putting out a newspaper. He went ahead and started a newspaper called Gazette.
- Siemer: How long did that one last?
- Younis: It was a normal sized tabloid, but started shrinking to a small one, and within six months it could not survive anymore.
- Willens: Was there a sense that there were different political points of view on the island that needed to have their own publication?
- Younis: Yes. There was that sort of feeling because at that time the political stage was pretty active. The two main parties which were called the Popular and the Territorial, were pretty strong. The Popular was the strongest and the largest at that time, the most influential. Most of those who wanted to have a newspaper, they were in the opposition, mostly Territorial. They wanted to say their own piece in a different way. The Popular Party at that time was much more conservative. They used to keep their activities to themselves.
- Willens: How did you manage to cover the activities of a political party that tried to keep its activities secret?
- Younis: Even though I didn't understand Chamorro, I was sitting inside the legislative sessions where it's mostly spoken in Chamorro. I used to gather some information here and there, and I had a general understanding of the issue. The fact that I know a little Spanish and I know some sort of background of the local communication, helps me. Also, I would go to certain people to try to speak about issues in English and then write about it. Sometimes, I didn't have to go to the leadership of the Popular Party. But issues were discussed in general. I used to go to certain people and talk to them and ask them to tell me, and they probably know that I already figured out what it is.
- Willens: Did either of the political parties try to influence you in terms of the way in which you covered events?
- Younis: Mostly the Territorial. They were much closer to open communication and were more open to talking about events and various subjects and so on. More than the Popular. As I said, they were very, very conservative and they did not show an interest in [getting coverage in] the newspaper. They didn't even want names in the newspaper. They used to be very, very much critical of the newspaper.
- Willens: Who, the Popular Party was?
- Younis: Yes.
- Willens: They were critical of the newspaper?
- Younis: In general.
- Willens: Were they objecting to particular stories or points of view?
- Younis: Well, yes. I remember several occasions. One of the cartoons that I remember I drew was of Eddie Pangelinan, and they got mad about that. They were very critical.
- Siemer: Back then, in the early 1970s, were more of the businessmen in the Territorial Party?
- Younis: Quite a number of the businessmen were in the Territorial Party, yes. It was sort of a business oriented political party. The Popular Party, I believe, started going into business

- when they were in full control of the Legislature at the time. The Territorial were a minority.
- Willens: When you got organized in 1972 it was just about at the time that the United States agreed to conduct separate negotiations.
- Younis: That was the initial event, yes.
- Willens: Did you have any awareness of this political status issue when you first began publishing your paper?
- Younis: Sincerely, no. I was not really much aware of the history and background of the political status. At that time, I was just learning about the issue, and I was trying to understand it. Also in a way, personally, I didn't want to believe what's happening because I felt that the Trust Territory or Micronesia should stay together. That's the way I personally felt until I found out that there was much more history that I didn't know about. I got to know more and I heard local people comment about the separation, about unification with Guam, political status, and so on. I was in favor of independence [for Micronesia] then, and that's what the local [Micronesian] government was trying to do.
- Siemer: Had you been to the other areas other in Micronesia by that time?
- Younis: No, I didn't go yet in those years. I first went to Palau I believe in 1974. That's the first time I went out in Micronesia to the other islands.
- Willens: Was it generally your view in the 1972 and 1973 time period that the people here were ready to make a decision about their future political status?
- Younis: At that time, honestly, no. I didn't think that the people were ready to make a good decision. They did not have the opportunity to learn of other political statuses, of other options, of the history of other islands or other nations and so on. I did talk to people and I tried to find out how much they knew. Many of them found out that they had better go and learn about American Samoa or Western Samoa, go and learn about other independent countries, what's happening, what kind of status they choose, and what other islands choose. At that time, I was feeling that if you're not ready, you don't know what you want. Either you do not want to see, to know about other options, or you have just determined already what you want. That's it. We want to be part of the United States of America. That's what I saw.
- Willens: What was your assessment at the time about the administration of the Trust Territory? Some people expressed a desire to get out from under the Trust Territory and that tended to motivate them.
- Younis: That was just true. They do not want to be any longer in the Trust Territory. They didn't see any real change from one year to the next. There was no development or any interest [on the part of the TT government] in anything. Not in business, and not in anything else. That was one of the major forces pushing people to decide without looking any further.
- Willens: That's interesting because by the time you came, in 1972, the United States had invested tens of millions of dollars in the Trust Territory. Did you see any evidence of change as a result of that expenditure?
- Younis: At the time that I arrived, the status negotiations started, and I really didn't have much of a chance to see what was the situation a couple of years before [the status negotiations started]. I learned about it during the process. Most of the impressions that I really got, and that's what influenced my view, is from local people. Most of those people who were

in politics or business had the view, from their knowledge and background, why we shouldn't be interested in Micronesia any more. One of the factors which also was a proof to me, if you may remember, was the demonstrations of the local community against the Trust Territory. They didn't want any more Trust Territory either because of the fact that there was nothing being done or because it was an obstacle to having the political status they wanted. Most of the Popular Party leadership was involved in demonstrations against the Trust Territory building and the Trust Territory Code. I took pictures that night they burned it and I published them. That's one of the things that makes me believe that people express themselves in a certain way.

Willens: So you were actually there and took pictures of the burning?

Younis: Yes, I did. I was thrown from the stairs with my camera while I was taking pictures.

Willens: Do you recall who led that march up from the Trust Territory?

Younis: Yes. The leaders of the Popular Party were Herman Guerrero, Eddie Pangelinan, Herman Palacios and so on. They all intended to burn the Trust Territory.

Willens: Were they able to actually set it on fire?

Younis: Yes.

Willens: The Code?

Younis: Yes, the Code. It was in the front door, front entrance. They kicked it down, and they burned it.

Willens: Do you recall any reaction from the High Commissioner?

Younis: I don't remember right now exactly what was the reaction. Of course it was unexpected. They were very surprised it happened. I think the High Commissioner had been aware of the fact that a march had been organized and they called for opposition to get rid of the Trust Territory and so on. Yes, they were ready for that. But not the other [events].

Willens: Did Frank Ada, as the District Administrator, try to stay out of politics?

Younis: He did. He was trying to stay out of politics.

Siemer: When the Political Status Commission met with the United States, how did you go about reporting what they were doing?

Younis: Most of the actual negotiations were behind closed doors. We were reporting what we were able to find out about the main events, and after that we would go and talk to certain individuals and try to see what they have done. Some people were outspoken; some people were pretty conservative and kept things hush, hush. As a newspaper, we have to go where there are sources who can give us information. We reported what exactly happened, like what subjects were being negotiated about. Sometimes we would get some copies of documents of discussions or proposals or ideas. We tried our best to get as much information as possible.

Siemer: How about from the U.S. side? Were you able to interview any of the members of the U.S. team?

Younis: It was difficult. It was really, really difficult.

Willens: Did the Ambassador ever agree to talk to you?

Younis: I tried. But at that time it was Ed Archer who was pretty close to me. I didn't know exactly

- why, but we became very close friends and we discussed a lot of issues. He told me that, "Well, what I know, it is not my authority and I cannot talk to you about it."
- Siemer: Would people talk to you on background, not for attribution.
- Younis: There was some, yes. Here and there tips or hints or information was given to us from certain people to check on this.
- Siemer: Was it a subject that people liked to read about?
- Younis: Mostly, yes. In those days the newspaper was really very saleable and very attractive to many people, and they used to read it.
- Willens: Did you increase your printing volume from 500 to a larger number in these early years?
- Younis: In 1974, that's when I had new equipment and I started printing a tabloid.
- Siemer: How many copies could you print then?
- Younis: I used to print one thousand and some, I believe.
- Siemer: Where was the newsprint coming from at that time when you switched to tabloid?
- Younis: I bought it from the U.S. I was importing newsprint from the U.S. in those days.
- Willens: Just to provide the historical perspective then, how many copies do you print each day now?
- Younis: Today we print 4,250.
- Willens: Five days a week?
- Younis: Every day.
- Willens: After the second session of negotiations in May of 1973, the Marianas Political Status Commission made a report to the District Legislature to which they attached the various position papers. My recollection is that your newspaper took advantage of that to publish an article.
- Younis: Yes.
- Willens: What do you remember about that event?
- Younis: It really stirred up a lot of questions and a lot of interest in the local arena. Most of the people really wanted to know exactly what happened and where we were going to be. They do not really see it exactly the way it stands and the way the words are written. They cannot see it. But they know the issues which are of concern and some of the issues they found very interesting. Some of the issues they wanted to discuss further and debate it. They wanted to hear somebody else's opinion of a solution. It was exciting. We had some excitement among the local people as to what the Commission had done and what was going to be done.
- Willens: Do you think that making the papers available in that way was a useful step in terms of public education?
- Younis: I think it was a useful step. I believe so.
- Willens: Did you ever hear from the United States delegation whether they favored or disfavored making the position papers public?
- Younis: No, I don't remember that. I don't recall that there was any position taken on that.

- Willens: At about this same time, in June of 1973, three members of the Commission—Dr. Palacios, Joeten and Felix Rabauliman—were interviewed by the *Variety*. They gave an interview in which they said, among other things, that the negotiations were going too fast, the United States was better prepared than the Commission, and generally they were unhappy with the way in which things were proceeding. Did you personally talk to them?
- Younis: I remember that, yes. Later on I got with Joeten I think for a special interview about some of his concerns. And after that, later on I talked to Felix Rabauliman, I recall.
- Willens: What do you remember about the way they felt?
- Younis: I think (if I remember) I felt that somehow they had a great concern. I think also somehow they were right in their position saying that the United States was well-prepared. Like what I said earlier, the community or the Commission was not really fully aware, not fully prepared as to what they wanted and what they expected to have. That's one of the reasons I spoke with Joeten and Rabauliman and Palacios. I was pretty close to Dr. Palacios about many issues that had to do with independence, had to do with what kind of vision he had, how the Saipan and the Chamorro community should exist. He himself was using the Western Samoa and comparing it with the American Samoa as the way to convince [people] at that time. He used to talk to me about those issues. He himself was not very much agreed as to how the status negotiations were going. I remember this. I did feel on their side, really. There should have been a better chance of getting to the community to explain and make them aware of what they should be expecting on the issues.
- Willens: When he referred to Western Samoa, then he must have been thinking of some form of free association—something of that sort?
- Younis: Yes.
- Willens: How would you describe Dr. Palacios based on your friendship with him?
- Younis: What I remember of Dr. Palacios, he was very proud person about being a good Chamorro. He thought the Chamorro people should be really given the best chance to exist on their own. Independence was one of his aims or one of his thoughts to go for. He thought that the Trust Territory was not given a chance to exist the way they should and take their own affairs in their own hand. He was hoping that somewhere somehow the Mariana Islands should be independent in its own ways. And of course I believe that he probably felt also there would be an affiliation with the States or still have some sort of a connection.
- Siemer: Back then did he favor all of Micronesia staying together?
- Younis: He also was in favor of all of Micronesia staying together. And he was supporting the Micronesian unity also at the same time. That's true.
- Willens: What was your sense of Felix Rabauliman at the time?
- Younis: He was in the same line. He was in the same sort of thought like Dr. Palacios. About the same, I guess.
- Willens: Did you have any experience in dealing with other leaders of the Carolinian community during those days?
- Younis: I was pretty close with Abel Rabauliman. I was pretty close also with Dr. Kaipat, but not much with political exchange. I was very close to Luis Limes.
- Willens: Did you have the feeling then that the Carolinian community was apprehensive about being put together with the Chamorro majority here in some kind of a commonwealth?

- Younis: No. I didn't see it at that stage. No, not yet. At that time, they were considering themselves as a part of the community and they would get the same thing as the Chamorros. And most of those, which as I said I know, I can remember almost 99 percent of the Carolinian community was in the Territorial Party. They took the same direction as the leaders of the Territorial Party.
- Siemer: Were the Carolinians a more cohesive community back in the early 1970s?
- Younis: Yes, a much more cohesive community as compared to today. They were much more organized, their own leadership was chosen, they had their own political spokesmen to deal with, and so on.
- Siemer: Did your efforts as a journalist cover the Carolinian community as well?
- Younis: I did focus quite a bit on their activities as a community, as the only significant minority here, and as a cultural entity.
- Siemer: Did the Carolinians back then have much representation in the TT government?
- Younis: Not much. Very very few Carolinians were there. Like Alonzo Olimar used to go over there and Joe Lifoifo. Very few people were employed by the TT. I don't know if you are aware, Dr. Palacios had some Carolinian blood.
- Siemer: Was he close to the Carolinian leadership?
- Younis: He was very close.
- Willens: The three members of the Commission who were interviewed were all members of the Territorial Party.
- Younis: Yes.
- Willens: Did you think at the time that the Territorial Party was not fully supportive of the Popular Party leadership within the Commission?
- Younis: I believe the majority of the Territorial Party was against what was happening. Not really against in the sense of stopping everything. They were trying to express themselves that the negotiations should have been organized in a better way or other way. Probably they were not expecting it to be that fast as it was. What happened to the Popular Party was that they were ready to go full force and say let's accept what's happening [with the U.S. position].
- Willens: Did you happen to deal with Joe Screen on status issues at about this time?
- Younis: Yes. I used to talk to him about it, and I believe he had some certain influence over Joeten.
- Willens: What were Mr. Screen's views about the way in which the Commission was going about its business?
- Younis: He also had the same view as the Territorials were upset about. But of course that's not in the general understanding of what you are doing.
- Willens: A few months later after that interview, Joeten withdrew from the Commission and gave as one of his reasons that he was afraid that his views in the Commission might be taken as defending his business or economic interest. So he resigned, and he was replaced actually by Pete A. Tenorio. Did you ever talk to Joe Screen as to why he [Joeten] withdrew from the Commission?
- Younis: No. I talked to Joeten himself.

- Willens: What did Joeten say about it?
- Younis: He felt that there were several issues. What had been said there was not really in line with his understanding. He felt probably that he was a minority among so many, and he was not being listened to. He was not being considered. It seems to me that he did not favor the way the negotiations took off.
- Willens: You mentioned that the people in the community were interested in some of these issues that were being considered in the negotiations. What issues did you think the people really cared the most about?
- Younis: I don't know if there was any really definite point they were most interested in. They were taking each issue the way it was being told, being explained. If I remember, there was that sentiment, and especially I was learning that from the opposition, which was saying they are giving away too much land, they are giving away our natural resources, our sea resources, and we are giving up too much of our own values. Those things were a pretty hot issue among the opposition and they had also a great influence on the other side. But in those discussions nobody had yet become the opposition. They were interested to know those things—how much land was being given away, what the U.S. was interested in, what we were going to have in exchange for that, and what they were getting. A lot of discussion among many of our young people that I used to talk with was money. I remember Jack Torres, Manny Sablan, and others, talked about the issue and said, "What will the money do, what's \$16 million mean? That's nothing." I questioned how much we should really expect, since there were only 12,000 Chamorros and Carolinians on the island. I did realize that when they said, "\$16 million, it's good money," I used to tell them no, you are developing a bigger stake, bigger responsibility, more expense and so on. They started looking at a different angle, different side too. So we'd talk about 50 years, not one year or two years. Those things are still under debate. Once you develop discussion, you see the idea, look at it from different perspectives.
- Siemer: In 1973, as the status negotiations got under way, did you have anyone over in Tinian who was helping you report reactions over there?
- Younis: No.
- Siemer: How about in Rota?
- Younis: No.
- Siemer: Did you go over to Tinian?
- Younis: Yes. I went to Tinian and Rota.
- Siemer: Did you go over when the U.S. and the Status Commission had meetings there?
- Younis: No, I don't think so. But I know several people from Rota. I used to talk to Pete Ogo—he used to be a legislator—and Greg Calvo and several other people. I used to talk to them sometimes down there and see what ideas they had. But at that time in the political status negotiations, most of the Chamorros had a similar idea.
- Willens: It was in the spring of 1973 on the day that the formal negotiations opened, the *Pacific Daily News* had a very large headline to the effect that the U.S. seeks all of the island of Tinian. That reflected some leak from the U.S. delegation and it was viewed as shocking in the community.
- Younis: Yes.
- Willens: Did you try to explore what the U.S. requirements were going to be at the time?

- Younis: Yes. There was speculation I believe when the issue came up as to how much land should we give away. I think we were aware of what was talked about. I found (and I reported, I believe) the opposition would want to give too much land. They wanted to give too much land for military use. Tinian at that time didn't have really much of a major voice. I didn't think there was any opposition from the Tinian community itself. As I said, it was just discussion among the Chamorros as part of the community.
- Willens: They elected Mayor Felipe Mendiola in that year, and he was a very strong opponent of giving the United States two-thirds of Tinian.
- Younis: Giving too much land, yes.
- Willens: The opposition sort of combined around the view that one-third of the island would be enough.
- Younis: Enough, yes.
- Willens: And they did not think the United States should get any more.
- Younis: Yes. They opposed giving too much land.
- Willens: Did you ever talk to Mayor Mendiola about his views?
- Younis: I really don't remember if I talked to him or how we got the story or how we got the report.
- Willens: How about Joe Cruz?
- Younis: Joe Cruz, yes.
- Willens: Did you have many dealings with Joe?
- Younis: Yes, I had many dealings with Joe, and he supported fully whatever the Commission decided. He used to tell us all kinds of nice things about it, and we reported it.
- Willens: How would you describe Joe Cruz?
- Younis: I knew Joe Cruz since I came to Saipan, and I got to learn what he had done. He was printing a small newspaper way back in 1968, 1969. And he was critical of the Trust Territory and so on. But it seems to me that he changed later and he became pretty supportive of joining the U.S. But he is known as one who cared what will happen as part of the cake [is divided]. They know him, that kind of attitude. And he liked to be on the stage all the time. We had a theater there, and he used to be one of the actors. Not many people took him very seriously.
- Willens: You don't think so?
- Younis: No.
- Willens: How about this desire to be U.S. citizens? That was something that seemed to be very important to him, to become a U.S. citizen.
- Younis: It was, yes. It became very important at that time.
- Willens: Was that a viewpoint that was shared among the community?
- Younis: Yes, really he was known for that view. Him, Eddie Pangelinan and several people were known to support that.
- Willens: How about the ordinary man and woman in the street? Do you think that they thought U.S. citizenship was one of the important objectives here?

- Younis: Yes, quite a bit. That was I believe one of the factors that convinced a lot of people to go along with the political status, joining the United States.
- Willens: Do you have any recollection of meeting with Phil Burton or other members of Congress when they would come visit here?
- Younis: I remember Phil Burton came in one time, at that time when I was still just starting the newspaper. I met him personally. I didn't have an interview with him. But I believe when he visited I had one or two stories from him.
- Willens: Do you have any general impression of the way in which the U.S. Congressmen would view the islands when they came out here?
- Younis: Well, Phil Burton was one of the major factors really, major personalities, who had a great influence on the leaders of the Commonwealth, leaders of the local people. He was very close to them, very central in bringing them to the point where they understood what they could have and what they could not have and what the Congress can do and cannot do. That's true, yes.
- Willens: What do you think motivated him?
- Younis: I really didn't know what was the main motivation he had. I didn't have enough time really to look into the background. But I was told mostly by locals that if they had anything about which they were concerned they would go to Burton.
- Willens: Even after the separate negotiations started, the leaders of the Congress of Micronesia were still opposed to the idea of separate negotiations. Did you have any conversations with Lazarus Salii or Tosiwo Nakayama or Andon Amaraich or any of the other leaders of the Congress of Micronesia about this subject?
- Younis: Well, yes. I happened to discuss it and talk with some of the leaders, and they were still in the same position. Even when the negotiations were going on with the Marianas, if I remember. Yes, I talked to Nakayama, I talked to Lazarus Salii, and they still believed that Micronesia should be one unified entity. But of course they all the time expressed (if I remember), and Salii said, "If you guys go your own way that's all right and that's your destiny." And I believe that Nakayama said the same thing. Some of those really I do remember. I don't know if I reported it exactly, but I had reports from Nakayama and so on.
- Willens: At the time that you spoke to them, had you changed your view about the ability to keep all of Micronesia together as a single unit?
- Younis: No. I was still believing that Micronesia should stay really as a unified entity. I didn't believe that the U.S. should really favor one entity and negotiate separately with the others. And you know, if I remember, the fact that the negotiations with the Marianas created some sort of a view in Micronesia that they should look to their own way to negotiate with other countries. Remember when there was a big deal about Truk wanted some negotiation with the Russians. So it was a little disappointing to see that Micronesia was breaking down at that time.
- Willens: Were you surprised when the Marshalls and Palau went their own way?
- Younis: I was very surprised. In those days, I didn't want to see that happen to the rest of Micronesia. At that time the FSM was not yet fully unified when the Marshalls and Palau started negotiating on their own. I thought that everybody was now going his own way.
- Willens: After the Covenant was signed in February of 1975, there was a period of about four

- months before the plebiscite. What do you remember about the opposition to the Covenant?
- Younis: The opposition to the Covenant was getting weaker and weaker. One factor was that the negotiation [terms] were much clearer than when it started. And the other factor was that several local politicians changed their views and joined the negotiation team and would support what's happening. Dr. Palacios, Pete Tenorio and some others.
- Siemer: Changed their views?
- Younis: Changed their views from what they started.
- Siemer: So there was a much more solid front.
- Younis: There was, yes. Changes took place from several personalities by going along with what the negotiation had accomplished, what we got. They make people believe and then [the people] follow.
- Siemer: At that point, there was an actual document that everyone could look at.
- Younis: Yes, but see the leadership was so important. The opposition were talking about not enough time to read, not enough time to explain, gather facts, and so on. But the people, they just believed what the leaders were doing. They listened to what they say and they go for it.
- Siemer: There were no leaders in the legislature who were opposed to the Covenant, were there?
- Younis: There was only Larry Guerrero at that time, a legislator from the Territorial Party.
- Siemer: Larry Guerrero raised some questions.
- Younis: Yes.
- Siemer: What was happening on the Carolinian side by this time in 1975?
- Younis: Well, from what we saw, the leadership was not satisfied. Rabauliman and Olopai took a strong position totally opposing the Covenant. The Carolinians were a big portion of the Territorial Party.
- Siemer: Was the Carolinian leadership divided with respect to the Covenant?
- Younis: Yes. Dr. Kaipat had his own group and some of the others were in full support of the Covenant.
- Siemer: Dr. Kaipat was in full support?
- Younis: Yes.
- Siemer: Do you remember the concern about the language on the ballot and about the way that the "No" vote was phrased?
- Younis: Yes.
- Siemer: How did you feel about that when you saw the language on the ballot?
- Younis: Well, personally I believed that was what was agreed upon by the delegation or by the members of the Commission. But when it came to reactions, whether it was fair or not, I felt that some of the local people really did not understand fully what was said. There was political education and they were trying to explain. I remember the Commission tried to show what it meant. But some people were still questioning some of those issues. There was if I recall the concern about how the "Yes" and "No" vote was worded which made it like more restricted choices if they were to vote "No."

Siemer: One of the concerns was that the “No” option on the ballot referred to the situation remaining the same and did not indicate there would be an option to renegotiate with the United States. Some of the Carolinians expressed concern about that and whether that was a fair way to put the choice.

Younis: That’s one of the concerns. There was no door left open for them to look into. And that’s the same way that I was feeling. It was too fast and too quick and no time to see if there are any other options. That was the general sentiment.

Siemer: Did you meet Erwin Canham when he came out here?

Younis: Oh, yes. He used to be my contributor. He used to be one of my biggest supporters of the local newspaper.

Siemer: What did you think of the way that Canham went about the task of educating the public?

Younis: I believe they tried their best, that they did as much as required. But I felt the time was pressed.

Siemer: Very short.

Younis: Short. But the way they tried to have the general education on all the areas of the Covenant, technically it was fine, but whether that was digested within a short time, I would question. Also there were concerns that when it comes to a question [about the language of the Covenant], there was no way for them to change it.

Siemer: How did the local people view Canham? Was he well liked here?

Younis: He was well liked. He was very humble and very casual and very frank.

Siemer: A good journalist, too.

Younis: Yes.

Siemer: Did he contribute to your newspaper?

Younis: Well, he wrote, but not on the issues. He wrote a lot of things, and he was supporting the newspaper in fact. He had a lot of input. His office would advertise its own public announcements in the newspaper. He made that known to me as a daily process and so on. He knew better than anybody else. I was surprised about that myself. He supported the local media, yes.

Siemer: What did you think of the registration process when Canham tried to get everyone registered to vote here? Did that work out well?

Younis: That was done well. I believe they did it well and I believe [they did] all that was expected of them. There was not any conflict about who was registered and why.

Siemer: At the very end of the registration process, there were a number of challenges to people who registered.

Younis: Certain domiciles and residencies and so on. Yes, I believe there was. Most of the people in the local community who know who they [the people who registered] are and where they are and how they live and so on. I myself was surprised to see people questioned [as to their registration], because they didn’t know exactly where they were [in terms of residence and domicile]. It’s true.

Siemer: Were local people very concerned back then that outsiders might vote?

Younis: Yes, especially because Micronesians would not say openly we are Palauan or whatever.

You see, there was some mixed blood also. I really don't remember who in particular was challenging where they came from. But in general, it was especially those who were really in favor of the Covenant.

Siemer: When Canham published the list of registered voters it seemed that people were very quick to point out who might not be qualified.

Younis: Oppose this one and that one. Yes. A lot of people knew those families or those individuals who did not reside here, where they came from and so on. Of course, if you do a registration, everybody will go and everybody will do that [register]. Now whether you have the right to vote or not, that's a question. And that's exactly what happened. Somebody is saying no, this guy is not supposed to be registered. He's not supposed to vote.

Siemer: Was the outcome of the plebiscite about what you expected?

Younis: Yes. In those days when the opposition was growing weaker, yes, I thought that the majority was going to be large. I was expecting that.

Siemer: After the plebiscite, the efforts started to get approval from the United States Congress. Did you go back to the States at any time when the Covenant was pending before the Congress?

Younis: No.

Siemer: Did you have anyone there who was reporting for you on what was going on?

Younis: No, I didn't have anybody. But we talked to those local politicians who had been there [before Congress]. We took their views.

Siemer: What was the mood here after the delay began to pile up in the Congress?

Younis: The local leaders were still believing that things would take place, it was just a matter of time. And I believe there was a feeling the same way here locally. I didn't get a feeling of frustration.

Siemer: Then the District Legislature began to consider bills with respect to the constitutional convention. Do you recall that Canham vetoed several of those?

Younis: Yes, I remember.

Siemer: He was concerned about representation for the Carolinians and how that was going to be accomplished.

Younis: Yes and how it [the Constitutional Convention] was going to be composed and who would emerge [as elected delegates] and so on. Yes, I remember, but I don't remember how many. After the approval of the Covenant, and since most of the Carolinians were a part of the large group opposing the Covenant and negotiations, they feared that the majority at that time [who favored the Covenant] would decide they were not entitled to anything. They don't want this [the Covenant], so they don't get anything [now that the Covenant is approved]. That's kind of what the issue was.

Siemer: Was the Carolinian leadership worried that they would not be able to elect delegates to the constitutional convention?

Younis: I believe there was concern about their representation.

Siemer: Had they had problems electing people to the District Legislature or to the Saipan Municipal Council? They always had somebody, didn't they?

- Younis: All the time they had somebody, yes. I remember when Joe Lifofoi was campaigning for the local legislature and was elected and he was Carolinian. There were not many people ready to do so in those days, those negotiating days, so there was less Carolinian representation. In those days, the Carolinian community was really very close among themselves, too close, culturally and socially and so on. And they were not ready to be involved. Later on, yes, there were more of them [who ran for public office].
- Siemer: The election for the constitutional convention was supposed to be non-partisan.
- Younis: It was.
- Siemer: What do you remember about how that election was conducted?
- Younis: Well, you see, knowing local politics, I was expecting that it was going to happen this way. Like I said, still after the political status negotiations and after the Covenant, there was still the same general feeling among the people, who should be there and should not be there, who was capable and was not capable, who would speak for me or not speak for me. Some of the leaders really who have done their job as a leader with the Political Status Commission gave the way for others to campaign and go for it and get elected.
- Siemer: Was it non-partisan? It wasn't Territorial or Popular?
- Younis: I think partially, yes, but not really too much. Maybe some people were beginning [to consider it in a non-partisan way] but very very minor. I know everything done there in those days was totally a political position.
- Siemer: A very large majority of the delegates who were elected to the Constitutional Convention were affiliated in some manner with the Territorial Party. There was quite a small group from the Popular Party. Why did that happen?
- Younis: Well, if you take a major move in that regard, most of the voters will go the other way. Maybe there is the feeling that whoever negotiated the Covenant should step aside and let others do the Convention. I believe most of the candidates who had run for the constitutional convention were young, educated, and they were not active or affiliated fully with a party. But still we could see their interest was great. I think it was intentionally done because of great influence [during the Covenant negotiations] of the Popular Party.
- Siemer: How did you go about reporting on the Constitutional Convention?
- Younis: Well, I had several reporters stationed there almost every day.
- Siemer: How many reporters did you have at that time?
- Younis: We used to have three or four. And we put someone [at the Convention] almost every day (I think every day). We were also helped by American ladies who used to work for the War Claims Commission.
- Siemer: Was it a subject of a good deal of interest, the Convention?
- Younis: I believe it was. They were very interested because it was a major event happening and they wanted to understand it and to know about it.
- Siemer: When the Convention got to about half way and it had a draft, it stopped its work and had some public hearings. What do you recall about the reaction that you observed back then with respect to the work of the Convention up to that point?
- Younis: I really don't recall whether we had much reaction.
- Siemer: Was it your sense that people knew from your reporting pretty much what was going on and what the issues were?

- Younis: A lot of people there knew. People would discuss matters that were of very great importance, like land alienation. That was something that everybody was talking about. But all the time I personally felt that the Constitution resolved great issues. I personally supported it. In fact, I personally did follow the so-called public hearings. I remember the discussion was about implementation of the labor laws, immigration, and relations with local government. Those things I remember.
- Siemer: There was a great deal of interest in the definition of persons of Northern Marianas descent.
- Younis: Yes.
- Siemer: And everyone was testing that definition against their family to be sure that all the right people were included and the right people were excluded.
- Younis: Yes.
- Siemer: What did you think of the public education program that was conducted at the end of the Constitutional Convention to try to familiarize people with what was in the Constitution?
- Younis: It was fair enough, it was okay. I believe a lot of people understood most of the issues. It was done okay.
- Siemer: Does it make any difference whether a document like the Constitution is translated into Chamorro?
- Younis: It makes a difference. A lot of people they like to see things, read things in Chamorro. They get a totally different understanding—not really totally, but slightly different understanding in their local language.
- Siemer: How about Carolinian? Does it make a difference to translate it into Carolinian?
- Younis: It also brought pride to those communities. The Chamorro could see the Constitution translated everything in Chamorro or Carolinian. It was sort of a recognition of their culture.
- Siemer: It was very, very difficult to get anything translated into Carolinian.
- Younis: It's very difficult because the Carolinian language was not fully at that time written, described, and put together. I think today, yes, they have made a fine study of the Carolinian language and put it in a book.
- Siemer: They have done a lot of work on that.
- Younis: I think so, they've done a lot of work. Many words from English were translated into Chamorro and then into Carolinian, and it was decided how they should be interpreted.
- Willens: In November 1974 near the end of the negotiations there was an election for the Congress of Micronesia. Oscar Rasa and Pete A. Tenorio defeated Herman Q. Guerrero and Eddie Pangelinan. There is some debate as to whether political status was an issue, and some of the newspaper articles suggested that the Territorial Party was arguing that the negotiations should be slowed down. What is your recollection of whether that was an issue in that campaign?
- Younis: I believe that was an issue, really. Two things: one is the fact that the candidates were young, aggressive and energetic. And the second, they were represented as new leaders. The other factor is who else would be interested in the Trust Territory, what other country?
- Willens: I've heard some comment that Oscar Rasa was a particularly effective campaigner.

- Younis: He was showing a brilliant way of convincing people at that time. He came in as educated, outspoken, and pointed out locally in many ways what was happening. I recall how radically he was influencing people somehow.
- Willens: As a result of that election, there were some changes in the membership of the Commission, and Oscar Rasa did become a member of the Commission. The negotiations did not end in December 1974, but they were recessed until February. At that December 1974 session, the United States announced for the first time that the Defense Department no longer intended to build a base on Tinian in the foreseeable future. How did the community react to that? Did they care one way or the other?
- Younis: No, I don't think so. You see, once the idea got there, that the land was reserved for military use, it seems to me it was expected anyway. Whether it would be built as a military base or as other facilities, it didn't matter, as long as it was generally known it was for military use. So it doesn't matter either. It did not have any influence. There was no change in attitude about status. I didn't hear any comments.
- Willens: That's interesting. At various stages, the United States delegation tried to persuade the Commission and the people on Tinian that construction of a base would yield jobs and opportunities for better education, better utilities, and they attached a lot of importance to the actual construction of a base. Do you remember any of that discussion?
- Younis: No, I don't remember it.
- Willens: After the December round of negotiations, the leaders on Rota, supported by Tinian, decided to request a change in the Covenant so as to require a bicameral legislature in which the three islands would have equal representation. Do you have any recollection of how that came about?
- Younis: No, I don't remember. That was done internally among the politicians at that time. It was very quick. As I recall, it was surprising. How they missed it, not to be included in the Covenant at that time, I don't know. I don't know how they came out with it.
- Willens: Did you ever have a chance to talk to Benjamin Manglona or others about it?
- Younis: We did. We interviewed him, yes. I believe we wrote the stories about his opinion. But generally, the way I felt from others, was that his move was really too radical. But probably one major thing that would make his move effective was the fact that he utilized the tactics that would slow down the process of the Covenant and so on. That's why they agreed.
- Willens: Were you surprised that the United States ultimately agreed to that?
- Younis: I was surprised. I was surprised to see they agreed to that. I didn't know whether that move was in place because this was the wishes of the people or because they [the Commission] wanted to get finished. You were there, you were a consultant. You should know.
- Willens: I was surprised too when it came up. There's no doubt about that. But the Commission did ultimately support it unanimously and present it to the U.S. delegation.
- Younis: Yes.
- Willens: On the night before the Covenant was to be signed, Joe Mafnas, represented by Mike White, filed a lawsuit to enjoin the signing of the Covenant by the Commission. Do you know why he filed that suit?
- Younis: I really don't know. The only thing I thought at that time was because of his political background. He was Territorial, Joe Mafnas.

- Willens: Yes. He was also in the Congress of Micronesia. Did you go to the court hearing the next day?
- Younis: No, I didn't go.
- Willens: Just one last question going to the election of 1977 between the Joeten-Oly Borja team and the Carlos Camacho-Frank Ada team. What do you think were the key issues that resulted in the election of Governor Camacho?
- Younis: The key issue is the thought that Joeten would be taking advantage for his business, taking advantage of the fact that he would be a leader, be a governor and so on.
- Willens: Was the fact that Oly Borja was also a businessman also a factor?
- Younis: That was another factor also. The general feeling was that politics and business should not really be done at the same time. Now, the election result was very close. And the major vote-getting factor was that the Joeten team neglected Tinian and Rota. That made the difference, yes.
- Willens: Well, thank you very much for all your time and your valuable insights. We appreciate very much having the opportunity to interview you.