

INTERVIEW OF MARIA PAZ C. YOUNIS

by Howard P. Willens and Deanne C. Siemer

March 10, 1997

- Willens: Maria Paz C. Younis is the principal of the Camacho Elementary School in Saipan. She has very graciously agreed to be interviewed as part of our project. May I call you Paz?
- Younis: Yes.
- Willens: I'd like to begin the interview by asking you when and where you were born.
- Younis: I was born in Tutura, Saipan. That's San Vicente now. The real name of that place is Tutura. I was born in July 1943.
- Siemer: Could you identify your parents for us?
- Younis: My father is Vicente Palacios Castro; he's the brother of Sister Emilios. My mother is Mariana Muna Tudela.
- Siemer: Were both of them born in Saipan?
- Younis: Yes. Both of them were born in Saipan.
- Siemer: How far back did their families go in Saipan?
- Younis: For my mother's side, the Tudela, not very far, because my grandfather immigrated from Guam to Saipan in the early 1900s.
- Siemer: How about on your father's side?
- Younis: On my father's side, because we're Castro, we also have a Spanish background. I really don't know about my father's side because I was brought up by my mother's side. See, my great-grandfather is Spanish, Tudela. There are very few Tudela families, because they just kind of early moved somewhere else and then later they moved to Saipan.
- Siemer: Do you have brothers and sisters?
- Younis: I have only one sister who died in 1974. My parents both died when I was five years old.
- Siemer: Did your mother have any brothers and sisters?
- Younis: Oh, yes. She has five brothers and one sister.
- Siemer: Who are they?
- Younis: Pedro Tudela, Roman Tudela, Gregorio Tudela, Zacharias Tudela, and then my auntie is Victorina Tudela. The youngest one is Renaldo Tudela.
- Siemer: Do those families all still live in Saipan?
- Younis: Yes, they're all on Saipan, but three of them lived in Guam for almost 20 years. They just recently moved to Saipan.
- Siemer: Where were you educated?
- Younis: I was educated here at Mt. Carmel High School, one of the second group who graduated from Mt. Carmel in the early 1960s, 1963. Then I was sent to Kansas City. I went to Leavenworth, Kansas, to attend St. Mary's College.
- Siemer: What was the connection there? Was it the nuns at Mt. Carmel?

- Younis: Yes, the Mercedarian nuns. For your information, I was a former nun.
- Siemer: Is that right?
- Younis: Yes.
- Siemer: When?
- Younis: All the way from 1957 to 1968.
- Siemer: How did you join the Order? Out of high school?
- Younis: Yes. I was still a high school student when I entered. They call it an aspirant. They take in young girls, maybe 13, 14 years old, to kind of help them prepare to be a nun. So it was an elaborate kind of preparation to become a nun.
- Siemer: So you were still with the Order when you went to Kansas?
- Younis: Yes. I was in the Order when I went to Kansas.
- Siemer: And how many years were you there?
- Younis: Six years.
- Siemer: And what degree did you get?
- Younis: I have a bachelor's degree in biology and secondary education.
- Siemer: Then what did you do after you came back from Kansas?
- Younis: I came back from Kansas and taught in the Marianas High School for three years.
- Siemer: What years were those?
- Younis: 1970-73.
- Siemer: Then what did you do after that?
- Younis: In 1971 I got married, and in 1973 I stayed home to raise a family.
- Siemer: How many children do you have?
- Younis: I have six.
- Siemer: What are their names?
- Younis: Benny, Lila, Farrah, Amir, Salim and Surah.
- Siemer: What are they doing now?
- Younis: All of them are students. They are all going to college.
- Siemer: After your children were grown, did you go back to work?
- Younis: Oh, I went to work after two years at home.
- Siemer: What did you do then?
- Younis: Well, first I taught at the Garapan Elementary School for six months. I had a problem because I had two of my kids (my oldest kids are a girl and a boy), and at that time I really didn't have a very reliable babysitter. So my attendance was really atrocious. So I decided I had to quit. Every morning I had to drive my two kids and I had to bring them to class or run up to San Vicente to drop them over at my auntie's. I really hated the situation. Because at that time my babysitter sometimes wouldn't show up without notifying me, and it was kind of hard because the telephones weren't that efficient or available. So I can't blame her for not telling me that she wasn't coming. So I stayed home for maybe

about a year. Then they asked me to run a preschool, now it's the Sister Remedios Early Childhood Center. That's a very good early childhood center. So I was there for six years as administrator.

Willens: What years were those?

Younis: 1976 all the way to 1981.

Willens: Was that a separate preschool, or was it associated with the Catholic School?

Younis: No. It is a parents cooperative, the only school that is not run by nuns. It's now in the nuns' compound, but it was run by parents. Before it was run by the nuns, but when Typhoon Jean destroyed the building, the nuns didn't have the money to build up again. The parents said this island can't be without early childhood education, so a group of parents banded together, leased the property from the nuns, and they started the preschool. Three years old to six years old.

Siemer: What did you do after that project?

Younis: I was there for six years, and then after that I went into business.

Siemer: Which one?

Younis: The *Variety*.

Siemer: Oh, the *Variety*?

Younis: Yes. Went there for three years. Then there was an announcement for a vice principal at Hopwood Junior High School in 1985. So I applied, and I went to work as the vice principal of Hopwood Junior High School.

Siemer: How long were you there?

Younis: All the way to 1989.

Siemer: Then what after that?

Younis: Then I applied for the central office position, an administrative position in the central office for the National Diffusion Network, NDN. It's a very effective program funded by the federal government. Unfortunately it's the best-kept secret of the Department of Education. It is actually a lot of programs developed by teachers that are research-based. Then they have to be validated by the Department of Education in order to start being disseminated from one school to the other. So it ends up with what the teachers call the demonstrator, so they do a ten-year program from one school to the other, trying to implement that. And there are a lot of good programs that were under that program. We still have a lot of them here in the CNMI.

Siemer: Programs that work here?

Younis: Yes. A couple of them came over here, and they're still working.

Siemer: When did you get your present job as principal of Camacho?

Younis: After 1993, I decided to take my family to Israel. So I was in Israel for almost one year.

Siemer: Excellent! What did you do there?

Younis: I took five of my children. My oldest son had just come back from the Navy, so he refused to go. He said for two years I was off-island, I don't want to move again, I'm tired of traveling; I just want to stay in Saipan. So he went and became a teacher's aide and then he went to college. So I had five of my children with me in Israel.

Siemer: Did you go back to the Younis village?

Younis: Yes, I went to Ara. Then we stayed in Haifa, and then we were going back and forth, literally about a 40-minute drive from the village and also to Haifa. So my oldest daughter went to the University of Haifa, and myself also. The rest of my children went to a high school in Haifa.

Siemer: Did you stay with relatives while you were there?

Younis: No. We had our own apartment but close by [we had] a Younis brother in Haifa. Right below the Bahai Temple. It's really a beautiful place.

Siemer: How did you meet your husband?

Younis: Oh. That's a very interesting story. In 1971 he came here from Guam. It started when he went to Japan as an exchange student to work with the TV commercial and cartoon business. He's also in the industry. Actually by profession he's an artist and an illustrator. In order for him to work in Japan he had to get a visa. While they're working on the visa, he met somebody in Japan from Guam who invited him to come to Guam. So he stayed in Guam for three months. But then the immigration authorities in Guam were after him because his visa had expired. So they said well you have to take the next flight out. So I think he was going to the Philippines, but the flight to the Philippines got canceled. So the last flight out of Guam was going to Saipan, so he just hopped on the plane. He didn't know where he was going, had no idea, and he came over here. So he stayed. He met a lot of friends who kept on convincing him to stay. So I met him at a party, just a barbeque given by a stewardess at Continental. He was with his friends. I was a teacher at that time at Marianas High School. I got there in 1970, 1971. So we were looking for an art teacher. When I knew he was an artist, I said maybe I could get you a job, you know. That's how we really started. Our relationship started first basically about how he could be a teacher working for the Department of Education. But then it was difficult for him to get permission to teach. He applied for the teaching job, but they never really hired him. So we started the Younis Art Studio. We set up an art studio for him to do illustrations and then sell them to the paper. At that time Mike Malone was running the *Micronesian Star*, so he was doing all the illustrations for ads and some cartoons and giving them to Malone to publish in the *Micronesian Star*.

Siemer: How did you come to take over the paper?

Younis: When they [Malone and Peters] finally said, well, we're leaving, and we're just going to give it to you guys, if you want to run it. So they really gave it to us.

Siemer: Was Malone with the Peace Corps?

Younis: Yes. Malone at that time was with the Peace Corps, and so was Gene Peters. So Gene Peters stayed and worked with us for about a year, but Malone quit when we took over. But Gene Peters stayed with us for about a year or so. So that helped. Then also we recruited Victor Pangelinan, a local guy. He worked for one or two years with us. I mean he was just a stringer reporter. That's how it started: my husband said, "I think we're going to take over the print shop and the newspaper." I said, "How can you do that? I don't think we have the experience." I had a long talk with my husband, who said, "Yes, Saipan is developing, and the one thing this island needs badly is a newspaper for people to put in their views and to make sure that the government is doing the right thing. They have to have a forum to give their points of view." So we were thinking okay, what shall we name it? We were saying it's important for them to have news and people's views, so we said why don't we

call it the *Marianas Variety News and Views*. Then on March 16, 1972 our first issue was published.

Siemer: What work did you do for the newspaper back in those early days?

Younis: Well, I was still teaching at Marianas High School. So basically it was just support. After school I would go there and help collate the paper. I also tried to sell ads. Later on I became like an accountant, you know, just helping with the accounting. Also later I became a personnel manager. But at that early time, it was just whatever was necessary. Delivering newspapers. Oh, yes, I was a good delivery person.

Siemer: Was your family active in politics when you were growing up?

Younis: My grandfather was. He was the one who established San Vicente village.

Siemer: The Muna side?

Younis: The Tudela side. My grandmother is Muna. My grandfather was Joaquin Sablan Tudela. They really had the Spanish features. You could see that they were half-caste. Very few families here have the real European features—the Flores here, the Tenorios, some of the Pangelinans still have the European features, and definitely the Tudelas. They have the long nose (and everything) from my grandfather's family. So you could see that they were very closely descended from the Spanish, from Valencia. My father knew how to speak Spanish and also English. He learned it in Guam when he was in Guam. He had good English and was able to survive very well right after the war because he was able to communicate with a lot of the Mexican soldiers and also with the Filipinos who wanted to speak English.

Willens: That was right after World War Two you're speaking about?

Younis: Yes.

Willens: Did people with that kind of clear Spanish origin have sort of a higher social status in Guam?

Younis: Yes, and also here in Saipan.

Willens: It was also true in Saipan?

Younis: Yes.

Willens: You were at St. Mary's for about six years?

Younis: Four years in college and two years working there in Kansas City.

Willens: So you got your B.A. and the two majors in four years, and then you stayed on to work there?

Younis: For two years, yes.

Willens: What did you do for those two years?

Younis: I left school in 1969, and then I stayed there and worked all the way until 1971. I worked at the Kansas City Medical Center as a research lab technician.

Willens: You were using your biology?

Younis: Yes.

Willens: Did you think of going on to a career in the sciences?

- Younis: For a while, yes. But when I decided to come home, then I knew that I didn't have the opportunity. I tried to go into the medical field, and I got training on all those machines that I was using in Kansas City. When I came here for a visit in the spring of 1970 and I went to the hospital, they didn't have all that equipment. So I said well, I don't think I will ever pursue this, because they didn't even have the equipment here for all kinds of testing. So I said, "Well, I'd better change my mind and see if I could apply for education," because I have a secondary major in education/biology. I was a certified teacher for secondary biology when I was in Kansas City. I taught at Bishop Ward High School.
- Willens: When you were in Kansas City for those years, did you come home for summer vacations?
- Younis: Only in the spring of 1970 after I left in 1969. In early 1970 I came here; I think it was in January or February when I came home.
- Willens: But you'd been away then for about four full years.
- Younis: Oh, yes.
- Willens: You mentioned that your grandfather was very active politically. Was your father or mother active with one of the two political parties in Saipan?
- Younis: My parents died when I was five years old. My father died in 1943. I was six months old when he died. But he was active, because he was one of the very few Chamorros that the Japanese allowed to go beyond sixth grade.
- Willens: Really?
- Younis: Yes.
- Willens: Your father?
- Younis: Yes, my father. They said he was very smart. So they utilized him. He was one of the people who they brought to Guam after they invaded it, to serve as an interpreter. So he went there for maybe two or three months, and when he got back, he got some kind of a stroke. He was taking a shower one hot summer day or something, and then he just collapsed. It could have been a stroke. He was pretty young; he was maybe only 27 years old.
- Willens: Really?
- Younis: Yes. He was born in 1920, and so he was only about 24. So young, you know.
- Willens: How about your uncles? Were any of them active in the Saipan political scene?
- Younis: Yes, my uncle Pedro Tudela was very active in the Popular Party. They never really got elected, but they were very, very active—voting and making sure that people got to the meetings. My grandfather was the Commissioner of the village of San Vicente. He was the one who founded the village. He went to all the farmers and said maybe it's about time that we have our own church and our own school. Why don't we get together and build us a village. So all the farmers there in Dandan moved over to San Vicente, so they had a homestead in the village and then they had a farm also. So they were commuting back and forth between their house in San Vicente and their farm over there in Dandan area. We started with about ten families.
- Siemer: What party was your grandfather active in?
- Younis: I think he was in the Popular Party.
- Willens: When did the San Vicente village get founded?

- Younis: I think it was in 1952 or 1951.
- Willens: When did you personally become familiar with the political party setup here on Saipan?
- Younis: When I was young, because my grandfather had to run for Commissioner. At that time there were elected Commissioners. So we went house to house and asked the people to vote for him. He stayed about four years as a Commissioner, until he said I don't want to run anymore, let somebody else run. He never lost the election; he decided he didn't want to run anymore. So we went and asked one of the Cabrerias to run instead of my grandfather.
- Willens: So you went out as a teenager to help campaign for your grandfather?
- Younis: Yes. Then we usually went to Chalan Kanoa when they have this big loudspeaker about which party is supposed to be talking and speaking. So we were active. We would go down there and just listen to all that. At that time, we didn't have that many villages—only Chalan Kanoa. So everybody went to the Chalan Kanoa Municipal Building, and they had that one big meeting.
- Siemer: That's where they had the loudspeakers?
- Younis: Yes. Then everybody would be talking and discussing stuff.
- Willens: Do you remember some of the early plebiscites and referenda where the people on Saipan voted to reintegrate with Guam?
- Younis: No, because I was away from 1963 all the way to 1969. I was in the States. Plus I was a nun. My earliest recollection is when I was between 10 and 13 years old, and we were very active teenagers going around and trying to get votes for my grandfather. After that, I was with the nuns, so we were not really allowed to talk about politics and stuff like that. So I kind of missed some of that excitement.
- Siemer: When you were an aspirant with the nuns, did you live in a dormitory at school?
- Younis: Yes. With the nuns we lived in a residence for two years and then basically went to Mt. Carmel High School as a postulate, a novice sister. A couple of days after taking my first vows, I was sent to Kansas City. I was one of the first ones that was sent to St. Mary's. Two of us. They sent two of us first to see how we would succeed in college.
- Siemer: Were there other women in your high school class who went away to college?
- Younis: Not for a while. They kind of experimented with us. Then I think after two years when we were doing very well in college, then at that time there was a big typhoon that also destroyed a nuns' building. Instead of rebuilding it, they sent a couple of more nuns down to Kansas City. But at that time they allowed somebody to go to Nebraska, St. Mary's again. So we were kind of dispersed back. Then that whole organization moved to Kansas, and we had a place like a seminary. I don't know how many people were there. But the convent in Liberty, Missouri is dedicated just for training for the nuns. We have a whole building and everything else with all the Mercedarian sisters there.
- Siemer: Had any women from Saipan gone to Kansas ahead of you?
- Younis: I was the first one.
- Siemer: Then it was a couple of years before anybody came after you?
- Younis: Yes.
- Siemer: Do you remember who came after you, who the next ones were?

- Younis: Oh, Agnes McPhetres was in the second group. Chailang Palacios. Liz Rechebei. Rosa Palacios of Palacios Power, the ones at CHC. And Sister Isabel, one of the few that remained. And there were a lot of others from Palau and Ponape.
- Siemer: Was Bennet Seman in that group?
- Younis: No. Bennet was never a nun. It was her sister Hercoba. Most of the Micronesians went to Kansas City.
- Willens: When you came back and started teaching at Marianas High School, did you become reacquainted with the political status issue that was then very much in the minds of the people?
- Younis: Oh, yes. Actually I want to tell a story. When I first came back and I was one of the first college graduates, and I was a certified teacher in Kansas State. I came back here and applied for a position, and they told me okay, the pay was \$1.25 an hour. So I looked at the Superintendent, Mr. Johnston at that time, I forgot his first name. I looked up at him and said, "You know, that's very strange and odd and really sad. I just said I did not come back to my island to be discriminated against. I said you're paying me \$1.25, and all those other Americans who are also college graduates are getting much higher salaries. So what's the difference between me and them. Why should I receive \$1.25 as local wages." I said, "In the past maybe that was okay because they don't have a degree, but I have my degree, I graduated from college, and I'm certified by the state of Kansas. And then I come over here and you turn around and say, oh, you're going to have this low salary because you are from here."
- Willens: What was the answer?
- Younis: They just said well, let's see what we can do, so they really worked fast, but still it was not comparable to what others were getting. And then later on I found out that even with the guys, the teachers that were male, they also discriminated. They paid them more than me. I found that out after I quit. I said how come they paid you higher than they paid me? Just because you're a male they pay you a higher salary? Oh, that was terrible.
- Willens: Those were men who were from the local community who were paid more than you were?
- Younis: Yes. They went to Rockhurst College in Kansas, they were graduates from Rockhurst. The Lt. Governor, he didn't teach. There's another who has died, Steve Pangelinan, and Joaquin Torres were together teaching; they were from one of the first groups that came from being college graduates and taught at Marianas High School.
- Siemer: They went to Rockhurst?
- Younis: Yes. The Lieutenant Governor, Steve Pangelinan and Torres. I don't know if John Torres graduated from Rockhurst.
- Willens: Was that a conversation that you had with the High Commissioner Johnston?
- Younis: No, it was another. There was a Johnston who was the superintendent of education.
- Willens: At the time you came back, there still were different wage scales within the TTPI.
- Younis: Yes.
- Willens: Was that an issue that many of the local people were upset about?
- Younis: Yes. Unfortunately, we didn't make enough of an issue with it. We sort of just accepted it as the way that things were. We didn't really raise it. We were just so anxious to help our

- own people, to get back home and try to teach and try to help the students. We were not that money conscious at that time, I think.
- Willens: Between the time that you left and the time you came back, there had been a lot of money from the United States expended on education.
- Younis: Yes.
- Willens: When you came back, were there differences that you saw in the education system here?
- Younis: Oh, yes.
- Willens: What were they?
- Younis: Well, in the first place, Marianas High School was just new. It was dedicated in 1969, so it was just about two years old when I came back. It had a lot of good facilities that I didn't have when I was growing up and attending elementary school plus Mt. Carmel. Mt. Carmel was just one of the first high schools, trying to start in 1963-64, and I was with one of the first or second groups to graduate from Mt. Carmel. Also seeing a lot of new classrooms; I mean the building was very nice, because before I left we were in a Quonset hut.
- Willens: Were there many Peace Corps volunteers who were teaching at the time?
- Younis: Yes. When I came back, that's one thing that really helped me a lot. When I was in San Vicente and was young, one of the things that I really missed was the intellectual stimulation. You know, you go to a village and you don't see anybody with education. I was glad when I returned that there were three or four Peace Corps living in the village. So I used to go and just talk with them and be friends with them.
- Willens: What was your opinion at the time about the Peace Corps program here in Saipan? Did you think it was a good idea?
- Younis: At that time, my impression when I first came was that it was a good idea, because I got to meet a lot of very good, excellent people, like Mike White, Mike Malone, and Jim Peters. Carl Smith and also this guy Charlie Ferrer, they both knew how to speak Chamorro. I mean they really stayed in the village and they learned the language, and they were pretty good. So we were able to communicate. I think that I had the impression at that time that the Peace Corps was doing very well. But before that, in the beginning when the Peace Corps came, there was a lot of talk and some shock. The local people were very mad; they said, well here we want to better ourselves and then the Peace Corps comes and they were shoeless, I mean they come without shoes to school and in shorts. And they say, what is this, we're trying to dress up and make ourselves presentable and then we see these Americans dressing kind of hippie style. So the people didn't really appreciate it. To the Chamorros, it looked like they were making fun of us. So a lot of people took it very negatively. But I think that the Peace Corps got the message and they shaped up. They sort of bent over in the other direction. They sure shaped up fast. So by the time I came back, it was already refined. The Peace Corps were already refined by the time I came back.
- Willens: Did you see any controversy between Peace Corps volunteers and the Trust Territory government? Do you remember any issues that came up where the Peace Corps volunteers were critical of the administering authority?
- Younis: Yes.
- Willens: What kind of issues came up?

Younis: One thing, I think it was from a couple of Peace Corps volunteers that I first heard about the Solomon Report. There were a couple of them talking, not radical persons, about how they kind of thought that it's not really right to try to bend or mold the thinking of the local people to be very pro-American. Some of them were saying that we should try to get back into being independent or be offered other opportunities. But it wasn't that strong a force. There were only maybe three or four Peace Corps [volunteers] that would sit down in conversation and we'd talk about it. But not that strong. They had to be very careful, because at that time I think as a Chamorro, as local people, we looked up so much to Americans. Then for somebody to sort of tell us hey what they're doing is really wrong, you know, came as a shock. So it took a while, so they had to be very, very careful, very sensitive, because they knew that they wouldn't get that quick response to say hey, yes, let's be very critical of the TT, you know what they're really trying to do. Because we were not ready at that time to get that kind of feedback. So there were a couple of volunteers who just sort of felt their way through and saw who they could talk to and what kind of information that they could give.

Willens: Did you have a view at the time as to whether independence was a desirable objective?

Younis: Yes. Well, later on, I think in 1972. I think sometime in 1973 we formed the Saipan Women's Association. I think with [Felicidad] Ogomuro and all those other women. About ten or 12 of us got together, and that's where some of the Peace Corps came in and talked to us. I can remember.

Willens: Who were the members of the Women's group that you can remember?

Younis: Okay. Agnes McPhetres, myself, Kathy Seman, Bennet Seman, Hercoba Seman, all the Semans were there. And then later on Malua Peter. And then Darlene Ogomuro, Chailang wasn't here yet. Let me see

Willens: Maybe other names will come to you.

Siemer: Any of the Sablans?

Younis: Oh, yes, Josephine Sablan. She's working at the CHC now. There were about ten of us.

Willens: Was there some event that sort of brought you all together?

Younis: Well, one of the aims of the Saipan Women's Association was to provide a forum for us to exchange ideas and to discuss issues. So we met once a month, and we discussed. And by that time, 1974 and 1975, the Covenant issue was a very real issue for us. We thought that we needed more time to study, we needed more time to see all the options. We were the first women that brought the issues to the attention of Ambassador Williams. We met once with him and we told him what we thought. Everybody was so hyped up about the land exchange in Tinian, and I said you're forgetting something, how about the ocean and the resources of the ocean. Who's going to go negotiate, who's going to talk about it. What if we find minerals in the ocean? Who has control over that? I was saying that nobody had mentioned it, and we were concerned about that issue, about the wealth of the ocean and the economic zones. But I don't think anybody paid any attention to us at that time. But I think the Rasas were against the Covenant. Oscar and Ponce Rasa were against the Covenant. And there were a couple of Carolinians. We were a very small group, a real minority, less than 100 people, that would make noise when everybody else was pro-Covenant. Then we tried to convince people to not really reject it outright, but try to kind of slow it down. We said, "Why rush? We are still not really that politically prepared to try to make that decision. We need a couple of years more to go over and think about it and look at all the different issues." So basically one of our main objections to the Covenant

was that it was kind of rammed down our throat. And we'd have to say, "Hey, we're going to gag. Hold up, you know." So we were trying to postpone it, at least maybe three or four more years to get more of the people better educated on all the different issues of the Covenant. And so all to the end, I don't know what percent, it was about 20%, voted against the Covenant. I did vote against the Covenant basically because I felt that we were not really ready to examine all the issues and the relationship with the U.S. and how this was going to be resolved. So we didn't vote for it. I also voted against the Constitution because I felt personally that we should have our own constitution first. And like I say, during my independent phase I was also pro-independence, and I said we should have our constitution first, and place in the constitution how our people want to be governed, and then that would be our basic document from which to negotiate with the United States. We did just the reverse; we did the Covenant and then we decided to base the constitution on the Covenant. It should really be just the other way around. And I remember I was very active during the negotiation of the Covenant, because we had the newspaper, and then we had this guy, who was the PR [public relations] for Williams.

Willens: Mr. Archer.

Younis: Yes. Ed Archer. Every day he would come to the house and we really had a lot of discussion and heated debate about it.

Siemer: Did he bring things for you to print in the newspaper?

Younis: No.

Siemer: Were there public releases or press releases?

Younis: Oh, yes, as a PR man. But any kind of sensitive, confidential matter he never discussed with us. But we just had a general discussion. Actually, my husband and myself were very active with a group of people at the beginning of the Covenant negotiations to be kind of pro-local, to try to protect our rights, like Dr. Palacios and Pete A. Tenorio. We always had pocket meetings. We'd go to their house and we'd talk about how to protect our interests. But then later on we found out that they kind of sold out. They gave in to the other side because for example, we'd have citizenship. We were talking about the land alienation, that's one of the biggest issues we were discussing, and it turned out you know they were giving into that. And also we were discussing the land in Tinian and the ocean [resources]. So we were very, very active in some of the groups that wanted to help protect the interests of the people. But later on, after two or three years, we felt that it sort of just went over to the U.S.

Siemer: For example, Pete A. ran in the election in 1974 before the Covenant was finally approved. Was it in that election that he seemed to you to go over to the other side, or was it after that?

Younis: After that.

Siemer: You said that you met with Williams one time. When was that?

Younis: That was right before the ratification of the Covenant. I think it was 1974. The Saipan Women's Association as a group invited Williams to meet with us. And we raised all these questions about the natural resources of the ocean, the zoning for 200 miles, stuff like that. And also we told him that we were rushing too fast and that we should have more time to really think about it, just to get better educated on all the different issues of the Covenant.

Siemer: Where was that meeting held?

- Younis: At the Continental Hotel.
- Siemer: Who did Ambassador Williams bring with him?
- Younis: I forgot, but I think there were a couple of people who came with him.
- Siemer: Did your Women's Association ask him good questions?
- Younis: Yes.
- Siemer: You weren't shy about it?
- Younis: No. And we definitely told him we were against the Covenant. He got the message that time.
- Siemer: What was your sense of what kind of person Ambassador Williams was?
- Younis: I think that he was willing to listen, but we were not too assured that he would say okay, we're going to slow this thing down, we're going to give it more time for you. We felt that he sort of ignored that side, you know, that we're trying to say okay, give us more time, some more public education on different articles of the Covenant.
- Siemer: What was your sense at the time while the negotiations were going on about whether the Marianas side, the Political Status Commission and their advisors, could deal effectively with Ambassador Williams and his advisors. Do you think the two sides were evenly matched or fairly matched?
- Younis: No, I don't think so. I made a remark to Ed Archer when he came in and they finally signed. I didn't even go to the ceremony, the signing. But they signed it, and the document came out. I was reading already the whole document. So he came and he said, "Well, what do you think? Don't you think this is great?" And I looked at him and I said, "Ed, you want my personal opinion?" Then he said, "What do you think about your personal opinion? What do you think about this?" And I said, "To tell you the truth, it's the most paternalistic document I ever read."
- Siemer: Paternalistic? Why did you think that?
- Younis: Because I felt that it was like the big grandfather, you know. I just felt that it wasn't really on an equal basis. Well, the U.S. is big anyway, and we're so young. But I just felt that the way the Covenant is worded was kind of overbearing, the U.S. was kind of overbearing to us.
- Willens: How did you feel about United States citizenship? Was that something that you cared about having, or was it something that you did not want?
- Younis: I didn't want it.
- Willens: You wanted to have a Micronesian
- Younis: I wanted to go to national status. I wanted to apply for that national passport or something.
- Willens: You didn't do it, did you?
- Younis: No, I didn't do it. I think once the Covenant was approved . . .
- Willens: Let me ask a few more quick questions about the Women's Association. I gather from what you say that all the women in the group shared your views. Were all the women of the same opinion?
- Younis: Yes, at that time. I remember they changed their mind later on.

- Willens: Most of you had been educated at some point on the mainland, isn't that right?
- Younis: Yes.
- Willens: Was there a sense then that you did not want to be part of the United States at all, that you wanted to have your own government?
- Younis: We still felt that we would be better off if we became some kind of a semi-independent entity. For me, I really cried at the ceremony of the independence of Palau. It really hurt that we could have had the chance to be like Palau.
- Willens: And you think that would have been more desirable?
- Younis: Yes. For me.
- Siemer: How about the concept of staying with the rest of Micronesia? At that time there were advocates of making all of Micronesia a nation—Ponape, Yap, the Marshalls, Palau, the Marianas—the whole Trust Territory. What did you feel about that option?
- Younis: Well, I was here when they were discussing that issue, because when I came back we still had the Congress of Micronesia. For me at that time, I wasn't too vocal at that time. I think they did have the referendum right before I came. Anyway, before I really got active, the referendum was about whether you're going to be a pro-American nation or we were going to remain with the Micronesians. For me, I felt that at that time it would be better if we could join the others, because if we were united we would have a better chance than if we started alone. My feelings were that if they divide and conquer, you know, just go into little pieces, and then it would really be easier for you to try and get what you want. Why should we buy it? But for me, I really didn't feel that strongly because also I felt that the way the Micronesians were united was kind of artificial, like imposed from the outside. All this time, up to 1962, we never heard about those other islands, and then we were all by ourselves until 1962 when the Interior Department comes in. Oh, we decided that you guys are going to be bunched together so it would be easier to administer. So it wasn't really as though there were those kinds of contact before in terms of business or economics or just friendly relations before 1962 with the other islands, so it kind of imposed a kind of artificial unity. They did work hard. We had all kinds of songs about the united nation of Micronesia in elementary school, you know, how great it is to be a Micronesian. So they did a very good job I thought at that time. Then within ten years we knew that it was kind of artificial. It was just very difficult to try to really create the concrete, solid unity that the U.S. would find it hard to break up.
- Siemer: Had you traveled much in the rest of Micronesia by that time, say within the 1970s?
- Younis: No, I hadn't traveled until just recently.
- Siemer: When you were in high school at Mt. Carmel, were there students from the other islands?
- Younis: Yes. When I was at Mt. Carmel I got to know Micronesians from all over Micronesia. From Ponape, Yap, Palau, Truk. So we got to know them a lot.
- Willens: Did you meet any members of the Congress of Micronesia from the other districts in the early 1970s?
- Younis: Oh, yes. John Mangefel, and Polycarp Basilius, and all the prominent Micronesian people we got to know, because of the newspaper.
- Willens: What is your recollection of John Mangefel and his views on status? Do you remember what his thinking was and what kind of a person he was?

- Younis: He impressed me that if he could have his own way that he will also opt for independence. I mean that he would like to protect the interests of Micronesians and he was a very strong leader. But he had a very, very nice sense of humor. He was really funny.
- Willens: And Basilius? What's your recollection of him?
- Younis: Basilius was also very, very strong, not anti-American, but he was just pro-Palau. He was a very good writer. Nobody ever matched his way of satire. He was writing about the gecko and stuff like that. He really put in things that would make you think twice, but yet it was put very, very nicely. During the TT time he could not really just go on writing and criticizing because he was hired by the TT, so he could not really bite the hand that fed him. But he would put in a very nice way how he felt in writing about the TT government that would make you think twice.
- Willens: Did they feel that the *Marianas Variety* was taking any political position with respect to status?
- Younis: Well, we tried to be the voice of the people. So we sort of maybe had to go with that majority voice of the people. But then we pointed out a lot of things that would kind of make the people think about it. But we didn't go outright and campaign against the Covenant or something like that. We just tried to put out things as they happened, and editorial-wise I think we did say something that it was going too fast and what's the rush and why can't we have a better public education before we vote on the Covenant.
- Willens: There was one point in the summer of 1973 when the *Variety* published an interview with Dr. Palacios and Felix Rabauliman and Joeten. And they were all members of the Marianas Political Status Commission, and they were quoted as saying that they thought things were perhaps going too rapidly and that the United States was better prepared. Do you remember meeting with any of them at that time to discuss those issues?
- Younis: I worked very closely at that time with Dr. Palacios. We went up to his farm and had a lot of discussions where people were telling him okay, maybe this is what it will be, don't give up the lands, make sure that we don't give up the lands. Basically a lot of issues were concentrated on the lands.
- Willens: Do you feel that his views changed about political status during the work of the Commission?
- Younis: It did change, yes. Toward the end he did change.
- Willens: Did you discuss with him why he had changed his views?
- Younis: Maybe we did. We felt that he sort of gave up the fight, trying to get as much for the people as possible and not just kind of agreeing to what the U.S. was saying. Then we just kind of stopped pushing.
- Willens: How about the land alienation provisions? Did you think that they provided adequate safeguards?
- Younis: I think that they tried their best, yes.
- Willens: How do you think it's worked out?
- Younis: It's not working the way it is supposed to work, because I think people have become very money-oriented. They wanted to go get the loopholes, tried to go in between and not try to accept it as it is. Like all of this Article 12 problem now is because they were just trying to see how they could go about it, try to make sure that they have the money. But for me, we really believed that it helped protect some of the land from going to foreigners,

because if that wasn't in, I think a lot of us would be homeless. I mean they don't have any homesteads.

Willens: Did your family keep land over in the San Vicente area?

Younis: Okay, for your information my father's side, the Castros, we owned Marpi.

Willens: Owned Marpi?

Younis: Yes. Where the CIA was before. And when that area was blocked off and no local people could go through all the way up to 1962-63, and it was my uncle before he died last year who was the one who didn't want to exchange. They were really forcing him to exchange land. He got to a point when he refused and said don't worry, the land's not going to rot, go ahead and use it, use it as you please, but I want it back when you're through with it. I don't want to exchange it. That's family land, and I don't want to exchange it anywhere. But what happened was that he was a seaman, a sailor, so most of the time he was off-island. And he had a sister, Sister Remedios, so they got Sister Remedios and said you really have to sign this document. So she did. Actually, we should be very rich if we wouldn't have exchanged. What happened was that land that was in San Vicente was owned by my grandfather by agricultural homestead. They had about 15 hectares of agricultural homestead, so he had a pasture for the cow and for the goats and then farming also. So that's why his land was very, very big—about 15 hectares. So the way they went about it, they went over to my grandfather, and there was already his five years to become private. He was going to be given the title for the land, because he had lived there five years and he did the fence and he had planted and farmed. Because that's the way it was set up, after five years that you homestead in a particular place, agriculture, then you can have the land. So when that five years was up, my grandfather went to the Land Commission and said all right, I want the title for my land. And they said well, I don't think so. They told him no, because somebody else wants to exchange the land. Somebody agreed to exchange the land and somebody's going to, we're not going to give you the land, we're going to take it away from you and we're going to give it to somebody else because they're willing to exchange the land. Your brother-in-law or son-in-law doesn't want to exchange the [Marpi] land, so we're going to take it [the San Vicente land] away from you. I remember when my grandfather came and said, "All right." And the coconut trees were just producing a lot of coconut. So for me I was very happy when my grandfather said, "Okay, why don't you get ready, come over to the farm. We're going to take all the coconuts from the coconut trees." My grandfather said, "When I came to this land, I had only weeds. And whoever comes to this land is going to find also weeds. I'm going to cut down all the coconut trees. I'm not about to give up, and whoever you're going to give the land to is going to find stalks." So my grandfather was already thinking of cutting all the coconut trees down on all his land and just destroying everything so that anybody who came in would have nothing. I mean it really would hurt him. So he went to Sister Remedios and it hurt him so much and said, "Well, if you do not exchange the land and the land is taken for me, you will never see your nieces again." It was that bad. In the meantime, my uncle was off-island, so Sister Remedios cried and said, "Oh, I cannot. I want to see my nieces, and you're the only two." So that's when Sister Remedios, and I heard they can do it legally now, yes, I think so because he was administrator of the land, and somehow they do something and they make her an administrator of the land. So she decided to sign the paper to exchange the land. So that's how it happened. So then I treasure that land. I mean I am not going to give up that land. But it's sad because I could have two lands. Because if the agricultural homestead for my grandfather, he could have given it, plus I would still have Marpi. But because of the land exchange . . .

- Siemer: She agreed to exchange Marpi, so your grandfather got to keep the land in San Vicente?
- Younis: Yes. And then she could see it, because my grandfather just said, "Okay, if you don't do what I say." So sometimes now my uncle will say if it wasn't for your grandfather, you know, I don't know why he had to do that. If it wasn't for him, we would still have the land in Marpi.
- Siemer: So he stayed in San Vicente, he didn't cut down any of the coconuts?
- Younis: Yes. Sister Remedios agreed to exchange the land.
- Siemer: So that's the current family land there?
- Younis: Yes. From my father's side.
- Willens: When did this set of events take place, approximately?
- Younis: Oh, that's way back. In 1950.
- Willens: In the 1950s?
- Younis: Yes.
- Willens: And the pressure was being applied by the TTPI or by the Naval Administration?
- Younis: Navy. At that time it was the Navy.
- Willens: And they wanted the exchange so they could develop and use the land for the NTTU?
- Younis: The NTTU, yes. But my uncle refused to, because he always told his children, don't you dare exchange it. It's going to be there. And we never really got compensated for the land use by the Navy.
- Willens: It's very valuable land today.
- Younis: I know. I was going to be so rich.
- Willens: Well, that's what I was going to ask you was
- Younis: Because we owned almost 16 hectares there.
- Willens: Sixteen hectares there?
- Younis: Yes.
- Willens: I was going to ask you about economic development. One of the reasons that people wanted to negotiate with the United States and become part of the United States was because they thought it would be a better foundation for economic development. Did you have any views on that subject?
- Younis: Yes, in a way. Because that was one thing that would be kind of a drawback for us being independent. We said well, what's our economic base, you know. Then we'd say well, we can still sort of have the United States maybe help us with the economic side. But yet for the self-government we would really go strictly like an independent nation. Of course, we thought hard about that, because we were aiming for the independence, and then we said okay, then we have to think about economics. That's why we felt that in order to have a good economic basis, we had to have a relationship with the United States. We couldn't really be 100 percent independent, because we have no economic basis to go as an independent nation.
- Siemer: After the Covenant was approved, did any of the members of the Women's Association think about running as delegates for the Constitutional Convention?

- Younis: Yes. I think there were one or two.
- Siemer: Did anybody run?
- Younis: Nobody did run for the First Constitution. That was in the 1970s, wasn't it?
- Siemer: It was 1976.
- Younis: Yes. Well, most of us considered ourselves too young at that time.
- Siemer: Was Maggie Camacho a member of your group?
- Younis: Yes.
- Siemer: She ran.
- Younis: Yes.
- Siemer: And won.
- Younis: Won. For the First Constitution? I thought that was the Second [Constitutional Convention].
- Siemer: First.
- Willens: She was the only woman out of 39 delegates.
- Younis: Yes.
- Siemer: But nobody else from your group ran back then in the First Constitutional Convention, 1976?
- Younis: No. For the second one, Felicidad Ogomuro and Maria Pangelinan. She's real active.
- Siemer: Is that Maria T. Pangelinan?
- Younis: Yes. She's my cousin, she's a Tudela.
- Willens: You've been in education now in the Marianas for . . .
- Younis: Oh, more than 25 years, yes. Many years.
- Willens: What's your assessment today about how effective the public school education program is in the Marianas?
- Younis: Well, I think we're not as successful as we should be, because we really just don't know what we want, how we want to be educated. Let's take, for example, there are some students here that we thought have learning disabilities. When they got all tested, there's a college kid who just came and said look, these students are not learning disabled. The problem is language. They said if these students would have been taught in their language from K to third grade and really got all the concepts in their own native language, when they learn English it's just a transfer of knowledge, it's just a transfer of language, all right, it would make it much easier for them to really grasp a lot of concepts. Like for example, we talk about the Covenant, the Constitution. If we put that in Chamorro and explain it to them, they would have a better grasp of what it means, okay? Whereas when you're trying to speak to them in English and they are trying to learn the language at the same time, and then trying to put concepts and understanding also into it, then that's where you have to do double work, they have to do a double take. And also the idea that every time we took the CAT test, we were telling the students we're in the 25 percentile. You give all this kind of inferiority to the students and within ourselves too, and then we're forgetting yes, they're in the 25th percentile, but they speak three languages. And we never give them credit for that. And even the PSS, we are not like other areas in the South

Pacific, where, for example, they are very firm in making sure that the Maoris in the Cook Islands get all the concepts in their own language, and then what they do is it's just a language transfer. All right? You're just translating from Maori or Chamorro or whatever in the South Pacific Islands. What they really stress, like in Western Samoa, even American Samoa, they get those things and then all they do is just a language transfer. Then they will understand the concepts very well. But now what we're trying to do, we're trying to speak to kindergarten kids who speak Chamorro at home, come over the school, and then we try to give them a concept to understand at the same time learning the English language. So of course they're not going to be as fast as a first-language English speaker. And then we're always telling them oh, you're not as smart as you should be, because they are [not performing as well on] the standardized tests. So there is some kind of a suggestion that some of these kids we'll just have to take them as they are. They have the language, they get all the knowledge, all the skills, all the concepts that they can understand in their own language, then transfer that knowledge into English. But what we're doing is we're treating our students like what we do for example when we order textbooks. All the way up to 1985, we were using a program, an English Language Arts program that was developed by Australia and New Zealand. It was the South Pacific Commission book of learning English, where they got all the knowledge, prior knowledge. They talk about coconut, taro, you know. They were kind of connecting the kids, what they know, and then they were just putting words and they were learning the English language, but at least they have some familiarity of learning the words and then getting the story, because they are familiar with the taro patch and the coconut and the ocean. You know it comes from their environment, so it is very easy for them to understand what they're reading. It's very easy for them to increase their vocabulary because they know when they say taro patch or whatever, wet, mud, and they'd see the picture, and it comes to them right away. So they just say yes, okay, mud, it means this, right away, because they have experience in that. Whereas when we decided to go HBJ, a state-wide textbook, we open the book and they talk about snow, the talk about skyscrapers and all kinds of things that they haven't seen and they were not familiar with. So they were trying to get into the meanings of the words. I mean for them to expect the students to know elevator or escalator or something when they haven't seen those things, so it's going to be very, very difficult for them. And then we expect them to perform at the fourth grade level English because we order a textbook fourth grade level, we know that the kids, even if they're in fourth grade, they're in second grade level.

Willens: In English?

Younis: In English. So why do we have to order a textbook and give it to the kids and say okay, survive, swim in this. So now that we realize the mistake we made five years ago. We're happy that we have all these mainland teachers. I'm not putting down the Filipino teachers that we had before, but it was just that now we have American teachers and they see the efficiency of what we have now. So right now we're not using those HBJ-published textbooks. What we are doing is trying to start where the students are. So they're making their own materials, trying to bring those students up at a rate that acknowledges the fact of where they are. I mean, you have to start where students are. You've got to get down there and pull them up to where you want them to be.

Siemer: You find your American faculty are sensitive to the cultural change?

Younis: Oh, yes. At least the teachers that I have here are really very sensitive to that.

Willens: Are some of the children coming from homes in which Chamorro or Carolinian is not spoken but English is spoken?

- Younis: Unfortunately yes, and that's where also we're going to have problems. We're going to have problems because their vocabulary will never increase because at home it's more like directional. Peter, go get this. Peter, come and do this. Or Peter, I want you to go to sleep. Go to bed. And then they turn around and say oh, you know what, you know, they go and discuss politics about the Governor in Chamorro, and the kids cannot converse or understand what this is, so they're missing a real good exchange of language at home because the parents don't speak to them in Chamorro, they [the kids] don't know Chamorro, and yet they have only a very minimal English vocabulary but basically directional, all right? But for them [the parents] to turn around and discuss real politics or economics or home issues or family values, a child will sit there and not know what they're talking about. So then when they go do reading, their reading comprehension is going to be very, very low.
- Willens: Well, many of the younger people we've worked with in recent years are sending their children to the mainland or Hawaii for intermediate school and certainly high school in order to increase their facility in English. What's your reaction to that?
- Younis: I think that would be helpful to some of them because they really have to be very well-prepared for college in order for them to succeed. There's a gap in the education we have here and when they go to the mainland. It's just going to be a tremendous gap, unless they go to a very good high school or even elementary school. Like my nephews, they're both Chamorro. They're high school dropouts. But then they decided that they could speak to the kids only in English. So tell me what kind of English comprehension those kids are going to get from their parents when most of the time what they hear their parents talk about between themselves is in Chamorro. Then they turn around and say okay, put up the paper, go wash your face, you know. So I think we're going to have a big problem. We're going to realize the mistake we're making now of not emphasizing to the parents to talk to the children in Chamorro so they can increase their knowledge in their language and appreciation of their language and not forget their language. Because how can you be Chamorro when you don't know the language? I tell the kids, have you ever seen an American who doesn't know how to speak English? You know? Have you seen anybody say, "Oh, yes, I'm an American but I don't speak English." Maybe they were even [working in] Russia or whatever, but still they will speak English and their parents will speak English to them. I approve. That is one thing I admire also about the Filipinos. Their kids speak very good English but they make sure that also they speak Filipino. I've never seen one Filipino kid who doesn't know Filipino. But they speak very good English. It can be done if you make sure that this is happening at home and at school.
- Willens: Thank you. That was very helpful. We really have completed the interview. Thank you very much for your time and for helping us with our project.