

On My Mind  
2/25/04

Merry Christmas! Felis Pasqua! Ammeseighil Ubwutiwel Layu\*I Luugh! Maligyang Pasko!

Well, it's Christmas Day, but one sure wouldn't know it driving down Beach Road. There's not a single holiday decoration between Susupe and Garapan! Coming back to Saipan after two days on Rota, where decorations were numerous, lovely and some quite ingenious - I loved the painted pandanus, and the painted red flowers whose name I can't remember that had been hung on various plumeria trees along the roads - it was quite a comedown, to drive along Beach Road out to Tanapag and find nothing - until one reached Garapan.

Apparently all of the light sculptures which sat on Beach Road last year, and which are not only unique, but also quite lovely, have been co-opted by commercial tourist interests, leaving none for the rest of us. Best as I have been able to determine, the fault lies with the Marianas Visitors Authority, who, I was told, hadn't had time to organize the repair, funding, and installation of the sculptures, and turned them over to the Japanese and Saipan travel associations, who, in turn, "donated" them to the Chamolinian Village.

Looks like the MVA deserves this year's award for the grinch that stole Christmas.....

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I found fascinating the list put together by Tribune columnist Jaime Vergara in this past Monday's issue of wide range of religious celebrations that occur among the multicultural peoples of the U.S. between November and January. "One finds," he wrote, "Muslim Eid-ul-Fitr, the end of Ramadhan; the Baha'i Ascension of Abdu'l-Baha, and the Nineteenth Day; the Jewish Chanukah and the Tu B'Shevat; the Hindu-Sikh Lohri (Winter Festival) the Japanese Ganjitsu (spoil the kids for a day); the Christian Christmas; the secular Boxing Day invented by the Brits; Kwanzaa of African Americans, and the various New Year celebrations."

Vergara points out that December 25 marks more than the birth of Jesus. It is also the birthday of the Greek god of Adonis, the Egyptian hero-king Osiris, and the gods of wine, Moran Bacchus and Greek Dionysius. He notes that it is also the time of the winter solstice.

It is, in short, a time for all of us to share the spirit of peace and brotherhood.

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Which makes all the more distressing the nationwide poll described in last Sunday's issue of the Tribune that "nearly half of all Americans believe that the U.S. government should restrict the civil liberties of Muslim Americans." Almost more upsetting is the finding of the poll, conducted by Cornell University students this past fall, that those who described themselves as highly religious, and who paid more attention to television news, were more in favor of curtailing Muslim rights than people who did not describe themselves as highly religious, and who did not pay attention to television news. 715 people were questioned in the poll.

Religion supposedly preaches tolerance and brotherhood. Access to television news supposedly is educational and broadening, yet in this survey, those two forces appear to have done just the opposite. A good time to remember that statistics can be used and interpreted to say anything the poll taker wishes them to.

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While on the subject of statistics, could someone please tell me on what basis the Commonwealth Utilities Commission believes separating the water and sewer divisions from the power division is a good idea? Has anyone collected any hard data on the costs and benefits of separation?

A separate agency for water and sewer services would necessitate the formation of another board of governance. Establishment of another bureaucracy to administer the work of the agency. Purchase of a separate fleet of vehicles. Separate offices, no doubt. All of which will cost enormous sums of money which the CNMI can ill afford at the moment.

If the concern is that one division is subsidizing the other, who is to say that that is always bad? At the moment, far fewer people are hooked into the sewer system than either the power or water system. Should the users of the sewer system be expected to pay for the whole thing themselves, when the customer base is so much smaller? Or is it more important to expand the sewer system so that fewer people will be forced to use septic systems and potentially harm the ground water? If the sewer system is separate from the power system, who will pay for the expansion?

The function and operation of all three divisions interrelate. Power is needed to pump water from the water wells, and is also needed to pump sewerage through the lift stations.

M. Sablan & House investigation

techno and wounded troops  
(Red Cross fake? - from CoC?)

Gay marriage ban

extend land lease

CUC separate from water and sewer

municipal powers