

On My Mind

2/07/03

Well, we've all had to acknowledge that the Governor is more autocratic than democratic, but going so far as to agree to build him a castle does seem to be carrying things a bit too far. According to an article in this past Tuesday's <I>Tribune</I>, since the building on Capitol Hill occupied by the Division of Lands and Surveys is now empty - having moved to Lower Base - "as proposed by the Department of Lands and Natural Resources the site can be designated for the Governor's Palace project."

The paper reports that DLNR Secretary Tom Pangelinan informed the Governor that the vacated space "is a perfect location to construct the state-of-the-art Governor's Palace," that the Governor has already indicated his preference for the place, and that MPLA agrees that it is an ideal place for the Governor's "mansion."

In his letter to the Governor Pangelinan explained that the new location, being away from a residential area, would provide a more secure setting for the governor's first family, since the present site is surrounded by private properties which puts the governor and his family members at high risk.

Excuse me? In the first place, the coconut wireless indicates that the present governor is not, in fact, in residence at the present governor's residence. Is the problem that it is not palatial enough, and that the governor would stay there if it were more so? I don't think so!

In the second place, the proposed site, while relatively isolated, sits atop a hill and is, therefore, highly visible from all directions. Every coming and going would be plainly evident to anyone interested - which is not as true of the present governor's house. Readily accessible as it is from all sides, security would seem to be more difficult at the proposed site than at the present site which has only one entrance.

In the third place, where would the money come from for this palatial, "state-of-the-art" mansion? The CNMI does not have enough money to keep medicines in stock at CHC, to provide adequate texts to its school students, to pay its share of employee health and pension plans, to pay raises to its employees, to pay the required matching funds for federal grants, and it's going to build a palace for the governor?

In the fourth place, isn't such excessive concern about the security of the CNMI's governor and his family a little out of proportion? The governor may not be performing up to expectations, but that's hardly cause for him to be the target of terrorists, rebels, pirates or any other extremists.

It's not April Fool's Day, so it isn't, apparently, a joke. But it sure ought to be.

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Ellen Goodman, a favorite columnist of mine who writes for the <I>Boston Globe</I>, joined other skeptics, in a column published in the <Pacific Daily News</I>) earlier this week, in asking whether the purpose of NASA's space program - and in particular its "manned and womanned" orbital shuttles - are worth the cost, risk and sacrifice involved.

According to Goodman, the only function of the Columbia shuttle that two weeks ago disintegrated on re-entry and killed all seven astronauts aboard, was to conduct a series of experiments - experiments that were far from being either terribly high tech or very important to the world's welfare. Among them: school projects for a 4-H club in California and a science club in Ohio; a project to see if urine could be made into paint, another to see how weightlessness affects harvester ants. Also experiments on creating perfume, improving crop yields, on cell structures and construction materials.

Goodman quotes an MIT professor as saying that all NASA is doing is 'creating excuses to launch human beings into space.'

In light of the excesses in the U.S. budget - and in the budget deficit - it doesn't appear to make a lot of sense for the country to go further into debt just to prove that the U.S. knows how to send people into space. Combatting AIDS, combatting poverty, curing cancer would seem ever so much more worthwhile targets for those monies.

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income tax....- if owed, don't pay?

remittances, and aliens owning businesses 1/20-22

If it weren't so damnably frightening, it would make quite a parlor game to try to guess which world-wide target would best suit the terrorist's search for a site - as homeland security agents have defined it - that would harm the greatest number of people, inflict the greatest economic damage, destroy a significant monument/landmark, and leave the biggest emotional scar. As I said last year, I am glad I live on this remote and relatively little-known island!

But even here we are not immune. All the trappings of increased airport security and the like have also been imposed here, adding to the complexity and cost of government - as it has everywhere else.]

So - let us hope that the many worldwide protests against war will grow, until the world's leaders

are forced to acknowledge and accept what so many of us already do: that war only kills, it does not solve the problems.

More incomplete news stories:

It's not clear whether the fault is DEQ's or the press,' but notices of beach area pollution and warnings to stay away for hours aren't worth much without knowing when the tests took place. Not news, but a press matter: the ad in the <I>Variety</I> earlier this week advertising an "Appreciation Special Dinner" on November 28<sup>th</sup>, that offered a variety of 20% discounts. Though hotel guests are mentioned, the name of the hotel is not provided. Apparently, one is supposed to guess based on the clue that the hotel houses the Dolphin, Hana, Tropicana and PalaPala restaurants. Like everyone should know, right?

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smoking has residual effects! Farley article on benefits of stopping smoking..... circa 10/20

classes on tourism include litter, safety from robbery.....

mall and duty free shopping.....

stats deceptive on outdoor kitchens, airconded houses, by NMHC Trib, 8/9, p 2

NMC training good - MV, 7/31, p p

Palau proposal to ban imported handicrafts Trib 8/1, p 13

Puerto Rico comparision

praise Torres!

From Rachel's Environment and Health News # 737:

medicines. dates on goods. fat content

Palau - good example of how to do things right. See issues of 6/7-14.....

mediation - no right or wrong means no sides to take.....

Palau - re gambling - will Remengsau's position hold?

tourism & shoppes in hotels

\$2 million to DPS, PSS, DPH ok if all islands included - Trib 5/22, p 3 (or 13?)

Canadian doctors have long-term temporary visas to U.S. through NAFTA. Trib 9/6/01, p.7

DPS - gun crimes: locals vs koreans/aliens?

Variety 4/2, p 1

Random notes from the past:

In response to a request for a list of flat rates charged to electrical consumers who are not metered: "There is no such list since the utility performs an assessment of the user's average monthly consumption by counting lights and appliances, by listing the information on the specifications data plates [a form for recording watts, amperes, number of hours, numbers of days, etc.] and determining the average number of hours of usage.

"Of 3339 electrical power users, during April, only 2012 were metered. This means there were 1327 consumers who were on flat rates." <I> June 1983 </I>

re: water usage: "10 years ago when a survey was taken of the water system, 75 percent of the island's homes and businesses were monitored for water usage. Now in 1988 CUC estimates that only 1 in 39 users were metered....Adding to the general chaos of the water system usage is the fact that wells which supply the mains and holding areas with water are also not metered, so no one really knows how much water is actually pumped out of the water lens which is on Saipan." <I>March 1988</I>

It is better now, isn't it?

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PDN reef coverage

consider Dan's paper that CNMI still could claim territory status under UN

A newspaper goodie too good to pass up: In the coverage of the crashed police car: "he added that the accident site in Susupe is the same location where a police officer, years back, ended up being amputated after figuring in an accident." Courtesy the <I>Tribune</I>, 3/12/02

ADA and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

argument that prisoners getting 3 meals a day, better sleeping conditions, etc. is = argument here re alien workers at low wages

do MicSems - esp re settling disputes

comment re lack of kitchen facilities in census report - custom is to cook outdoors.... Trib 2/25,