

On My Mind

3/12/04

The importance of recording history, of writing and publishing first-hand accounts of historical events as - or shortly after - they occur is exemplified by the book "An Honorable Accord," written by Howard Willens and Deanne Siemer. The "Honorable Accord" of the title is the CNMI's Covenant, and the book records, in a fair amount of detail, the debate, discussions, maneuvers, manipulations, conflicts and compromises that were involved in creating the document that defines the relationship between the CNMI and the U.S.

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One of the issues addressed in the book is representation of the new Commonwealth in Washington, D.C. The Covenant provides for a "representative" to the U.S. rather than the non-voting delegate to the U.S. Congress that all of the other insular entities have.

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Some people appear to believe that the position of an elected Washington Representative was deliberately chosen by the CNMI to distinguish it from the other entities. The Washington Rep was a distinctive feature - somewhat like an ambassador, with both submitting their credentials to the State Department - that emphasized the uniqueness of the CNMI's relationship to the U.S. Giving up that distinction would be harmful, according to their beliefs, since it would result in the CNMI looking more like all the rest of the entities. It is, I confess, a belief that I also have held.

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A reading of Willens and Siemer's book, however, reveals that such was not the case. The desire for a non-voting delegate was there from the very beginning. Even sharing Guam's delegate was discussed. But the U.S. was adamant. The decision to afford the CNMI representation by an "agent" (rather than a commissioner) was, in fact, a compromise, not the CNMI preference.

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If it weren't for recorded history, the truth of the matter might have remained in question. But with the testimony offered by Willens' book, there can be no doubt. The desire for a non-voting delegate to the U.S. Congress, as present Washington Rep Pete A. Tenorio keeps insisting, has been there from the very beginning.

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Speaking of negotiations with the powers-that-be in Washington, D.C., isn't it interesting that, months after the fact, all sorts of objections and protests are being voiced at the CNMI's awarding a very sizeable contract to Danny Aranza, former Director of the U.S. Department of Interior Office of Insular Affairs? Members of both the CNMI House and Senate, as well as Board of Education officials, have gone on record this past week to say that the contract awarded to Aranza's firm for preparing the CNMI's homeland security strategic plan was an unnecessary and wasteful expenditure of funds.

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It would appear that the purpose of this belated outcry is to placate and appease the U.S. House leadership, which, it is rumored, was not at all inclined to consider the bill granting the CNMI a

non-voting delegate with any sympathy - despite the supportive-seeming committee hearing - because of the continuing association of Aranza *et al.* with the CNMI administration.

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Whether this belated show of anti-Aranza posture will have any effect remains to be seen.

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At the risk of being called a heretic, a traitor, or worse, I can't help but ask why only one party to the "liberation" of Saipan will be so extravagantly honored during the celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its occurrence. Being feted are the U.S. military who, during the invasion, fought and killed thousands of Japanese soldiers.

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Particularly since the Japanese are no longer the enemy but the mainstay of the CNMI tourist industry, one would think that every effort would be made to temper, soften, deflect this slaughter and any remaining evidence thereof. Instead, 60 years later, as much of the militarism as can still be mustered will be featured - and flaunted - not only here in the CNMI, but world-wide. And as star feature of this glorification of war, Paul Tibbetts, Jr., pilot of the plane that dropped the bomb that annihilated millions of innocent Japanese civilians, is slated to be guest speaker.

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And what of the Chamorros and Carolinians, whose homes and businesses were destroyed in the war, whose ranks were also decimated, who were "liberated" only to be placed in internment camps? Should not those who survived be equally honored? Shouldn't the caves where they sought refuge - in which some were trapped and died - also be memorialized?

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How much more humane, healing, compassionate, merciful, uplifting, it would have been if the 60<sup>th</sup>, and indeed the 50<sup>th</sup> before it, were focused on peace, on forgiveness, on forging cooperation and understanding rather than emphasizing war, and killing and weapons of destruction. There is too much war in the world. So-called "terrorism" notwithstanding, the CNMI had an opportunity to promote peace and peaceful co-existence. Too bad it hasn't.

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Short takes:<br>

- Anyone who has encountered a non-responsive 800 number should call either consumer counsel Brian Caldwell at the Attorney General's office (664-2341), director of the Telecommunications Committee Adam Turner (664-2209) or Verizon general manager Anthony Mosley (234-6100).

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Mosley explained earlier this week, at a Telecommunications Committee meeting, that access to 800 numbers is determined by those organizations and companies who hold them, and the holders are not required to make 800 numbers universally available. But if the 800 number is not available only because the holder is unaware that the CNMI is part of the U.S. system, Mosley said Verizon would notify the holder of the error.

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- One of the most significant archaeological sites on Saipan is said to be in, on, and around the “footprint” of a hotel once proposed for the Nakamoto site in Garapan. Now the CNMI government is proposing to construct an artificial wetland on the site as a means of treating rain run-off from the Garapan Revitalization project. Said CIP Coordinator Chuck Jordan on MCV last night, “ The most cost effective way of treating the water is through a reconstructed wetlands.”

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Let us hope the site's artifacts are properly identified and protected - or removed - before being inundated.

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- And speaking of water: to all those who wrote to say that ice and steam are also water, I beg to differ. They are all forms of H<sub>2</sub>O. But the word water refers only to the liquid manifestation, as any dictionary will confirm.

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- Would it speed up the demise of the destructive scarlet gourd vines on island if schools took on as science projects the breeding of the leaf-mining weevils that eat the vines?

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- My arithmetic handicap popped up again in last week's column. Aranza wasn't paid \$600,000. He was paid only (!) \$400,000 - \$200,000 for the original contract, and \$200,000 more through an amendment.

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- Did anyone note the Nissan ad in the <i>Pacific Daily News</i> last week? It bragged about “moving mountains of dirt to create acres of customer parking and new and used car display.” Well, perhaps Guam has enough land to afford acres of paving, but even so, I wouldn't brag about it. Paving adds to the heat sink, and in replacing vegetation, also adds to air pollution.

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- Technically speaking, the settlement agreement between the Marine Revitalization Corporation, Anthony Pellegrino and the CNMI government is dead, because the agreement itself says “Absent enactment of a public law by the 13<sup>th</sup> CNMI Legislature within four months of the execution of this Settlement Agreement [which did not happen], there is no Settlement Agreement, and the arbitration shall resume.”

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Arbitration has not resumed, though a status conference is scheduled for some time next month.

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- Last but not least: according to the coconut wireless, a number of would-be TESOL students feel deprived because the Canadian Institute of English course has, apparently, been canceled. I would have thought they'd feel a great deal more deprived once they realized that their \$650 certificate bought them only a “certificate [that] can stand alone if you wish to teach volunteer classes or privately from your home” - to quote from its website “you asked” feature. (See “Will my certificate be recognized?” at “cie.ca/youasked.htm”)