

On My Mind

4/2/04

I don't suppose there's anything wrong with expecting children to help with the daily chores, to take care of and watch over their younger siblings, to lead the family cow to greener grass. After all, such tasks are all about sharing and assuming responsibility - good training for responsible adulthood.

But I do think there is something wrong with asking young girls - of early elementary school age - to assume the role of beauty queens, to simper and try look sexy for the camera, to put, on their boxy little forms, two-piece bathing suits.

Young children - boys and girls - are photogenic, attractive, adorable, pretty in the case of girls, handsome in the case of boys. But their attraction is in the childlike innocence they still have, in the naturalness of how they carry themselves, in their enthusiasm and openness, their spontaneity and unaffectedness.

Yet other than baby contests sponsored by photographic concerns, there don't seem to be any contests for most beguiling child. Which may be just as well. (Contests for which child can raise the most money is an entirely different issue.)

In my opinion, the "Little Miss" contests, that exhibit primary-grade little girls in grown-up bathing suit styles, and ask them to assume "come-hither" poses, come close to being an abuse of childhood. In fact, half of the participants in the current contest - at least in the pictures in the paper - look downright uncomfortable. Girls that age may pretend to be princesses, but that is a far cry from being a beauty contestant. Such beauty contests push adult values, and denigrate the innocence of childhood.

Next time, if sponsors want to involve primary grade children, they should consider focusing on kids (girls and boys) and kids' interests. Best costume, best kids' sports wear, best talent, most congenial - all included in this round of "Little Miss CNMI" contest - are ok, but areas calling for plunging necklines, off-shoulder attire, sexy poses - such as suggested by "best in gown," "miss sweetheart" and "most photogenic" should be left to the more mature.

And if best in bathing suit isn't included in the contest - and it was not on the published list - why was a publicity shot with the kids in bathing suites distributed to the media (see page one of the 3/28 <I>Tribune</I>)?

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It's not often that I advocate the CNMI copying something that Guam does, but I would do so in the case of the law passed by Guam's legislature requiring people pay advance disposal fees for major purchase items. Guam's Public Law 27-38 requires purchasers of cars, trucks, heavy equipment, automotive batteries, tires and white goods (like refrigerators, freezers, washers and dryers) to pay a fee in advance to cover the cost of disposing of the items when they are discar-

ded. The CNMI should do the same.

Guam's Environmental Protection Agency is currently in the process of writing regulations to implement the law, which goes into effect on January 1, 2005, according to a story in the *Variety's* 3/29 issue. The law sets fees ranging from \$3.00 per tire to \$200.00 for a car or truck. Those being consulted in putting the regulations together include automotive dealers, village mayors, the Chamber of Commerce, the hotel and restaurant association, the recycling association and the legislature.

Properly administered, the assessment of such fees in the CNMI would ensure that funds were available to do whatever necessary to keep the islands free of the junk cars and white goods and tires and batteries that now litter the landscape. While it is still a step away from the ideal - which would make the manufacturer of the potential junk responsible for its disposal - it is at least a step in the right direction - in assigning responsibility and accountability to those who create the trash, and in funding the means of cleaning it up.

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And speaking (or rather, writing) of proper administration, rather than building a 500 gallon water tank at Mihaville in order to provide water for its residents - who have been complaining about the lack thereof - wouldn't it be more efficient to tack up gutters around their roofs, and have them catch rain water? A 500 gallon tank won't help if the system is short of water, but 48 water catchment systems would go a long way in providing a more reliable source of water.

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I'm sorry. But I still don't get it. The Commonwealth Ports Authority, according to a report in the *Tribune* earlier this week, had soaring expenses during the first five months of this year, some .11 million over budget. Yet two days later, the same paper carried a story that CPA intended to raise the salaries of its employees as well as grant a 5% bonus to selected employees.

The story ends with the statement that the CPA expects its proposed passenger departure tax to help it "generate additional funds for various projects that the ports authority would be taking."

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The story broke the day before April Fool's Day, but maybe "Roilin' Froilan's" assertion that Rota and Saipan should also allow casinos was meant as a joke? According to reports in both papers, former governor Froilan C. Tenorio believes that casinos attract tourists - which would bring in additional revenue - and is once again urging lawmakers to permit them on Rota and Saipan as well as Tinian.

Tourists who would travel to the CNMI to gamble at casinos, however, are not quite the same kind of tourists as those who come to enjoy the CNMI's tropical setting, its sun, beach, and lagoon. The current marketing emphasis, in fact, would appear to be on the latter, and on a setting that would appeal to families. The aim of the Garapan Revitalization Project is on

removing girlie joints and tawdry bars - at least on Saipan - so that tourists will feel safe and comfortable.

Casinos, which don't even allow minors on the premises, would hardly seem to fit into this picture. Moreover, casinos aren't all that compatible with Rota's emphasis on potential eco-tourism sites in any case.

Nor does the evidence support Froilan's "theory." Tourists have not yet come to Tinian in large enough numbers to make the Dynasty a money-making venture. There isn't a lot of logic, then, in expecting that investors would be eager to build casinos on the other two islands when the one island that does have a casino is not yet making a profit.

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Short takes:

- Maybe the legislature should save itself the cost of a new building, and take up residence in the nearly empty and about-to-become white elephant otherwise known as the Fiesta Mall?

- Has anyone calculated how much it would cost to have CUC operate and maintain the Fiesta Mall power plant? The fuel cost, presumably, would be no lower than what Northern Marianas College is now being asked to pay. So how would it save money if the government were to provide CUC with the funds to keep the Fiesta Mall power plant operational, rather than giving the money to NMC?

- What is the U.S. War Museum? Where is it? Who are its supporters/backers? and why do we need another war museum? Long-time Tinian resident and author Don Farrell invites people to visit a war museum site that apparently has something to do with the firm that wants to mine ash in Pagan (see page 7 of the 4/1/04 <I>Tribune</I>), but the connection certainly is puzzling. Could it have been an April Fool's joke?