

On My Mind  
9/08/06

My condolences to the family of Guy Gabaldon. I met him on several occasions while he was on Saipan - and still remember him with a smile. He was always, of course, the hero who had captured hundreds of Japanese during World War II. But there was another side of him as well, that hasn't been mentioned in all the eulogies and remembrances that have appeared since his recent death. Gabaldon kept a small plane on Saipan (sorry, I've no idea what kind) with which, for a time, he made frequent trips to Pagan. I am under the impression that he had fishermen up there, and brought the fish to Saipan to sell. Reports at the time in the now defunct *Marianas Review* show that he used it for civic purposes as well: he brought camping equipment to Tinian for a two-week camp-out the Boy Scouts held there; he flew relief supplies to Rota after it had been hit by Typhoon Roy.

He was also somewhat of a firebrand. Another *Review* story reports on a letter he wrote to the U.S. President, members of the U.S. Congress and others, announcing that he had seized Pagan in the name of the U.S. and was armed and prepared to defend his position. The letter was sent in response to a statement by a member of the CNMI House of Representatives that the member planned to introduce a bill calling for a referendum on whether to terminate the Covenant between the U.S. and the CNMI.

Intensely loyal to the U.S., Gabaldon often took offense at what he perceived to be disparaging remarks about the federal government, or at what he saw as disrespect, or waste and abuse of federal funds by local government. In one letter, he claimed that he had been retained to investigate local government corruption (I don't know that this was ever verified...). He often expressed his feelings rather graphically (he used lots of capital letters) through widely distributed faxes, or letters to the editor. He was, in short, quite a character - and I mean no disrespect in saying that. Usually there was more than a grain of truth to his charges, despite the occasional exaggerations.

May he rest in peace.

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Been kind of calm and quiet lately, what with the governor off-island over the last two weeks. No new cockamamie ideas announced, no new promises made, no new threats to wage earners or blackmail of the legislature in the headlines. Can't help wondering, though, what he's cooking up on his alleged trek through Asia, what he will have to say upon his return.

One person who's doing all the right things is Frank Aldan, owner/operator of the Saipan Zoo. Aldan brought in 21 exotic new animals last month - from a black bear, a leopard, a tiger and a lion to a genet, coatmundi and a vulture - all of which he acquired from a zoo that closed on Guam. He's working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, responsible for U.S. zoo regulation, to make sure that animal enclosures meet USDA standards, and so that he can obtain certification and thus become eligible to add even more animals to his zoo. He has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Public Safety covering procedures should any animal escape, and is working with the CNMI's Division of Fish and Wildlife as well.

Aldan arranged to have the previous owner of the animals provide training on animal care and feeding to his own staff on Saipan. And he's developed a close relationship with Dr. Tudor, Saipan veterinarian - who offers his services to the zoo at no charge - to ensure that the animals

stay healthy.

Construction, painting and planting are not quite finished - Aldan says he's planning a "Blessing" and formal opening in mid-October. But the animals are already on view - a truly exciting and amazing sight! Appeal to tourists and islanders is bound to be high, putting Saipan on the map, as it were, as the only repository of such creatures in the entire Micronesian region - and perhaps in the entire Pacific (not counting Australia).

Let's hope the Marianas Visitors Authority's ad hoc committee on Destination Enhancement will lend its support to Aldan's efforts - which clearly constitute a major "destination enhancement" - regardless of whether he is a member of the MVA or not. As should we all - support Aldan's efforts, that is!

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My calendar sure seems full of late. Not sure what the reason is, but seems like everyone is meeting, holding hearings, getting together. In chronological order, on my calendar there's the Defined Contribution Plan forum - open to anyone interested in the issue - at 6:00 p.m. at the Multipurpose Center in Susupe tonight, the piano concert sponsored by Friends of the Arts tomorrow at 6:00 p.m. at PIC's Charlie's Cabaret, the presentation by Dr. Keith L. Camacho at American Memorial Park's Visitor Center also tomorrow evening, at 6:30 p.m., Red Cross' Club 200 next Saturday at 5:00 p.m. at the World Resort, a meeting of people interested in participating in Mariana Monologues on Tuesday, the 19<sup>th</sup> at the Aquarius at 6:00 p.m., and a hearing on proposed amendments to the Zoning Code to regulate "adult businesses" at the Susupe Multipurpose Center at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Last week-end there were the presentations at the Memorial Park auditorium - Dr. Dirk Spennemann's fascinating report on Rota under German times on Friday, and Don Farrell's on the role of Tinian during WWII on Saturday.

Sometimes it's hard to keep them all straight - I messed up two lunch dates this month already! There is a calendar on MCV/Saipan.com's home page, which would be a great place to post all the meetings, hearings, etc. - and save everyone from having to write them down someplace - be it scraps of paper, one of those hand-held gizmos, a pocket calendar or what-have-you. And you'd have all the details right at hand.

Unfortunately, that calendar is maintained by the Marianas Visitors Authority, and it will only post events it feels are relevant to its interests. Seems an obvious service some public-minded individual or organization might want to put up somewhere on the web.....perhaps as another "destination enhancement"? After all, tourists, too, might be interested in other than merely sports events.

And if it does become reality, maybe it would have prevented the conflict that occurred this week-end, when the Humanities Council belatedly announced a lecture on the politics of colonialism and Chamorro agency in the Mariana Islands at American Memorial Park, first for Friday night, and then for Saturday, in either case conflicting with other previously announced events.

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CUC's Patrick Deleon Guerrero said it first: the much-touted energy bill, signed into law last month as Public Law 15-23, is unworkable. For starters, it requires that CUC generate 5% of its power through alternate energy sources by December 2007 - and Guerrero said, at the Chamber of Commerce's Roundtable on Energy last week, that there's no way CUC can meet that

deadline. Nor, I imagine, could any other utility. Draw up the bid proposal, rank applicants and select a winner, get all the permits, construct the plant and have it be operational in 16 months? Unreal!

It requires the Department of Lands and Natural Resources to publish a catalog of potential sites for the development of renewable energy by December 31 of 2006. Excuse me? In two months?

On the other hand, it sets no deadlines for when the rather complicated (at least as described in this law) "net-metering" strategy is to go into effect, nor when CUC must provide two electrical vehicle charging stations on a 24/7 basis.

It does not include batteries in the list of sources that may be substituted for motor vehicle use of gasoline and diesel; in fact it lists only minivans and buses as having to reduce such usage, not passenger cars or pick-ups.

It discusses energy efficiency in buildings without mentioning energy audits; it includes energy savings in its definition of renewable energy; it limits the use of the term "cost-effective" to mean the ability to produce or purchase electric energy at or below avoided costs, etc., etc., etc.

Except for its sections on encouraging government use of energy efficient products, it leaves a lot to be desired. That such an important sector has been given such a shoddy legislative base is clear indication that professional expertise in this area is non-existent in the CNMI.

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Short takes:

Another web site of interest:

<http://www.webspawner.com/users/cnmigov2006/index.html>. You have to admire those who signed their names- assuming they're real!

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Does anyone else have problems with the oxymoron "austerity holiday"? Since when are holidays - defined in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the *New Oxford American Dictionary* as "a day of festivity or recreation when no work is done" equated to austerity - defined in the same dictionary as "difficult economic conditions created by government measures to reduce a budget deficit"? This administration's own distinctive brand of double-speak!

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The MSN home page MSNBC news sure shows its Western bias. On 9/7, its headlines included the birth of a panda in an Atlanta zoo, but made no mention of the birth of a son to the Japanese royal couple - which has been a big story here, what with the concern about lack of a male heir for the throne.

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Surely it was not the governor's intent to hire Dr. Jesus D. Camacho as defender-in-print and spin doctor? Either way, his latest letter to the editor, in today's Tribune is unbecoming (defined in the *American Heritage College Dictionary*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, as "not in accord with the standards implied by one's character or position") to a government consultant.

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This week's movies: 4 R's, 4 PG-13's, and 2 PG's, both of which have abysmal ratings on [www.rottentomatoes.com](http://www.rottentomatoes.com).

*"On My Mind" can also be found on the web at <[www.chamorro.com](http://www.chamorro.com)> or at <[www.cnmi.net](http://www.cnmi.net)> (just click on "News & Weather"). If you missed a column due to an overfull mailbox or whatever, you can find it in the "Archives" section.*

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