

## On My Mind

8/15/08

Is there a pattern? Some logic? Is there even supposed to be, behind CUC's frequent random outages? Somebody figured out that Gualo Rai doesn't get outages because the governor lives there. Any other insights out there?

What does the person who sits at the switchboard, and pulls the switches that turn off the power, think about? Does he get bored, and pull them at random? Does he have a grudge against someone that he's working off? Does he follow a random-number generator in making his decisions? Does he think he's following a pattern? Some logic?

It's one thing when there's a known schedule, and one can plan around it. But when the schedule isn't followed and the outages are not only random but also numerous, planning one's day gets rather frustrating. Is it safe to get into the shower? Will the soup be done before the power goes out? How does one time doing at a wash? And, of course, it's worse for businesses - especially restaurants.

The suggestion by TaoTao Tano's Greg Cruz that the Agrekko generators be airlifted in to Saipan rather than coming by ship makes more and more sense, especially given the state of Saipan's generators, and Murphy's Law: if anything can go wrong, it will.

But even that raises concerns. Has a foundation been laid? Where? How many generators will there be? Is there a roof? Is it weatherproof? Is the building secure? Will Agrekko bring its own manpower to provide maintenance? Where will they be housed? What about spare parts? Where will they be stored? What about a fuel line? Can CUC really guarantee sufficient fuel, on time, when needed? Can Agrekko really start up only six days after the arrival of the generators?

I'm not holding my breath!

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The lovely unbroken greenery of the scenic road past La Fiesta to Marpi has been rudely disrupted by preparations to build a Buddhist temple there, in the middle of nowhere - except that it's right along the road. The area is public land, and has been zoned rural, so building there is allowed.

But you'd think that it might have occurred to someone at the Department of Public Lands (which issued the lease for the temple) that allowing a building within sight of the road could set an unwelcome precedent. Once the unwritten rule - that those corridors should remain unspoiled, is broken - who knows what will be built there next? There are certain safe guards, to be sure - since the area is designated as rural. Nonetheless, one of the CNMI's biggest attractions is its beauty - and to tourists who come from urban areas, the contrast of the CNMI's natural beauty is much appreciated, enjoyed, treasured - so you'd think there'd be concern to protect that asset.

Unfortunately, DPL has yet to finalize a land use plan for the public lands under its control. Public lands are one of the CNMI's few natural resources; it would be only pru-

dent to make sure what little is left is carefully hoarded, to make sure it is being used wisely, and for the greatest benefit of the greatest number. However, without a plan in place, it all becomes random and subjective, and, quite possibly, wasteful and destructive.

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On the marine front, a local attorney, no less, has come up with an idea to derive more, rather than less, benefit from the [federal] waters surrounding the CNMI. What if, he asks in his blog, the proposed Marianas Trench marine monument were made even bigger, so that it would not be the second largest sanctuary, but **the largest** sanctuary in the world - and it were shaped in the form of a latte stone, so all the maps would re-enforce the Chamolinian culture?

Notes Wes Bogdan, "Adding 25,500 square miles to the proposed Mariana Trench Marine National Monument would make it the biggest monument in the world. Some people on Saipan say that supporting the establishment of the world's biggest marine monument would be a lot easier and much better than trying to get all excited about opening the second biggest marine park in the world." For more, and a picture of what the map could look like, go to < <http://www.saipanfreespeech.blogspot.com/> >.

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Another person with good ideas - also a lawyer, would you believe - is Representative Joseph J.N. Camacho, who has just added a new and very significant element to his helpful and informative web page of legislative doings: he's added the voting record of members of the House! As he explains it, "Procedurally, committee reports and first readings of bills and initiatives are voted [on] with a simple and simultaneous voice vote of "yes" or "no." However, when bills or initiatives are to be voted in their final form that vote has to be taken in a roll-call vote so that each member in alphabetical order must vote "yes," "no" or "abstain." A failure to answer after being called twice is noted as "abstain.""

Representative Camacho's web site: < [www.camachocnmi.com](http://www.camachocnmi.com) >.

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Carl Pogue leaves island this week-end, and with him goes National Public Radio as we know it. Pogue has nursed, nourished, pruned, primed, rebuilt and repaired almost every aspect of KRNMI during his nine-year stint as manager of the CNMI's only public radio station, and fought hard for its continuation, but the support simply wasn't forthcoming. Northern Marianas College had hosted the station, but its financial woes took their toll, leaving KRNMI with no place to go.

The best the CNMI can hope for is a mechanical streaming of broadcasts from Guam's public radio station KPRG - with no locally generated shows, and no opportunity

to pick and choose the shows to which the people of the CNMI might want to listen.

Pogue deserves a rousing send-off as he leaves island to continue his education in hopes of a position with the State Department. No one could have worked harder, been more devoted to making the station as good as it was, to keep it on the air.

Short takes:

One question voters might want to ask candidates for the Washington non-voting delegate position: will they keep the staff that's now there? Present staff, it would nearly unanimously be agreed, know their way around the Hill, know the staff of relevant agencies and offices, know the issues, know the Commonwealth and its history - are, in short, talented, knowledgeable, experienced, effective, respected. To bring new staff up to speed would take months that, in this time of crisis, the CNMI can hardly afford.....

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Speaking of staff, it sure must be hard on staff and members of the Department of Public Safety, to cope with the game of musical chairs the governor is imposing on them. Just get used to one Commissioner, and oops, that one's out and they have to start all over.

No doubt it's just as hard on the incoming and outgoing Commissioners! It all reflects rather poorly on the governor - as though he can't decide what he wants in a Commissioner, doesn't trust his own decisions, can't recognize a good one when he finds one, can't leave them alone to do their job.....

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It's not that I am ignoring the news about the indictment of the CNMI's Lt. Governor *et al*, but seems like it's all been said already. I would just note that it seems contradictory that the governor would say, "let justice take its course" in regard to the Lt. governor, but has already replaced the Secretary of Commerce.....

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How nice to see that California's Dr. Jesus D. Camacho finally got his come-uppance! I don't always agree with Bruce Bateman, who writes a weekly column called "Sour Grapes" in the *Marianas Variety*, but in this case, I echo his sentiments 100% (see Bateman's letter in today's *Variety*. Camacho had been silent for some time, but has recently re-surfaced. He used to write very long and pompous letters to the editor all about 'what's good for the CNMI' despite his never having lived here.

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It's been a week since I've asked for information from the Department of Public Lands on how it's determined whether a locale is of primary, secondary or tertiary importance in regard to putting up advertising signs - apparently location determines fees - but I've yet to get an answer.....

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And it's now been two months and three weeks since my accountant turned in a second response to Revenue and Tax's findings that my returns were "incomplete," and I have yet to receive my economic stimulus check.....On the other hand, there is progress, of sorts. I myself took yet another copy of the "missing" documents to Rev & Tax, and waited in line, and then waited some more while the information from my copies (guess

they couldn't find theirs) was entered into the computer. But then I was told I'd have to come back again, in person, to check whether the information was "uploaded." So, still no check.

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**Please note:** This will be the last column until at least September 26<sup>th</sup>, if not October 3 - I will be off-island visiting family.