

On My Mind  
2/22/08

A Beautify CNMI! sub-committee has begun working in earnest on the development of a trail system on Saipan that would stretch from Susupe Lake to Suicide Cliff along the backbone of the ridge connecting the two. It's envisioned that eventually, the many other existing trails will connect to the "spine" and extend further south as well. The expectation is that the trails will serve as an additional attraction and bring military scheduled to move to Guam as well as more tourists to Saipan.

When told about the project, an islander who's been known to go deer hunting on island asked, "But what about tourist safety? Thieves will just hide in the jungle and prey on anyone hiking along the trail."

To which the retort was made, "Thieves will know better. Hikers don't take valuables on the trail. They'll leave them in the car. That's where the problem will be."

In either case, it's a sad commentary on the perception - and perhaps the reality - that too many individuals in this society seem to be more interested in satisfying their own selfish needs than in supporting the well-being of the entire community.

Creating additional tourist attractions brings benefits to the whole island - increased revenue to the hotels, jobs for the community, customers for farmers, fishermen, car rentals, retail stores, business for the banks and communication businesses and on and on and on. Everyone benefits in one way or another if the number of tourists increases (up to a point, of course, but that's another story).

Usually only one to three people benefit if tourists are robbed. But the consequences don't end there. The tourists who were robbed carry that story back with them to their friends and neighbors and colleagues, with the result that everyone they talk to about it will have negative feelings about visiting Saipan, and the number of tourists who come here will go down. That hurts the entire community - all of whose well-being depends on how tourists are treated, what tourists say about their experiences on island, how the tourist industry fares.

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I neglected to mention, in last week's column, HOW one could get checks to KRNM. My apologies! Checks should be made out to KRNM/NMC, and sent to KRNM/NMC, P.O. Box 501250, Saipan, MP 96950. Or people can call Carl Pogue at 234-5766 and make arrangements to have them picked up, or they can be delivered in person to the studio at the NMC campus (best to call ahead to make sure Carl is there). Contributions can also be made by credit card by calling NMC, asking for the Finance Office, and telling them you'd like to make a contribution to NMC.

It doesn't matter how small the contribution. What's critical is that KRNM be given an indication that MANY people on Saipan listen to public radio. The bigger that number, the easier it is to persuade larger donors to contribute as well - because the larger donors then can see that there is a sizeable audience out there. KRNM does not carry ads, but it does announce who sponsors particular shows sponsors pay for.

Remember: to keep KRNM on the air, all its listeners need to do their share!  
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Short takes:

- It's too late to vote in most primaries on the mainland, but it is not too late to register to vote in the elections in November. Anyone who has ever established a residence in the U.S. (or Alaska) and is a citizen of the U.S. is eligible to vote in the national elections under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA).

For information about obtaining an absentee ballot, go to < <http://www.fvap.gov/> > , download the Registration and Absentee Ballot Request Form, fill it out and send it in. The site < <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/vag/html> > provides a list of states and the addresses to which the application for the absentee ballot should be sent. To fill in the form on-line go to < <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/onlinefpca.pdf> >.

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- I can only say it with some reservations, since I was unable to call up a copy on my computer and therefore do not know what it actually says, but I would offer congratulations to the legislature for passing, and the acting governor for signing into law, the Fireworks Control Act that now becomes Public Law 15-128. Hopefully, at the very least it bans those boom-bombs we've been plagued with this last year!

It is somewhat dismaying to realize, however, that the last legislature passed 128 new laws. Surely that sets a record of some sort?

Department of Corrections Lino Tenorio was quoted in the <EM>Trib</EM> earlier this week as saying that the new prison could accommodate up to 500 inmates, based on a projected of prison population. Wouldn't it have been nice if he'd said, instead, that the

Will be interesting to watch which of the outgoing members of the House find new positions with the government....

Then there's Lower Base. Along the shore of the lagoon. More potential prime real estate on public land, which is instead being dirtied, polluted, abused, kept out of the market. Yes, it's convenient to have container yards and oil storage tanks close to the harbor, but "close" is, after all, relative. To move some of those facilities inland, away from the lagoon, would mean a distance of only a few miles. Rehabilitating the area might take some doing, but it makes no sense to keep it dirty just because it always has been.

Public land should be used for the benefit of everyone, but much of the public land that comprises Lower Base - especially along the shore - does not. Isn't it time this was re-evaluated as well? Not all commercial dock space has to be ugly, after all. In some cities, they have been redeveloped into profitable tourist attractions.

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Some of those, who'd been there before, even expressed their pleasure at being re-elected in terms of how much they liked their "job" and how happy they were to have their "jobs" back.

Excuse me, but when did being a legislator become a "job"? Aren't legislators, who make the laws the rest of us must live by, supposed to be representatives of the people who elected them? Aren't they supposed to be working on laws that help the community, that represent the people's best interests, that improve the lives of their constituents, and the economy? Aren't they supposed to be answering to the people? Serving the people?

Perhaps it was just a poor choice of words, because doing all those things could

be considered a "job" too, but I would have much rather heard those legislators say they were happy to [again] be in a position to work towards helping their people and their community prosper, towards improving education, towards improving the infrastructure.

Prime real estate on Capital Hill another neglected asset....

- While it's been mentioned that military build-up plans should include measures to prevent the brown tree snake from entering the CNMI, there's been no mention of taking measures to prevent any other kind of invasive species - be it mollusks, rodents, insects or what-have-you - from entering. Equipment and ships themselves could easily act as carrier carriers for such pests, particularly if they come direct from Okinawa, where safeguards may not be in place to check out-going cargoes.

"There are good reasons to begin with a presumption against government action. As coercive monopolies that spend other people's money taken by force, governments are uniquely unqualified to solve problems. They are riddled by ignorance, perverse incentives, incompetence and self-serving." From "Don't look to gov't to cool down planet" by John Strossel in opinion column in MV, 11/21/07, p 12 from "Townhall")