

8/10/12

The shenanigans (definition, per < <http://wiki.answers.com> >: "anything that is wild or over the top, something that is considered crazy. It's also used to refer to shady dealings or actions that aren't necessarily above-board") this past week-end defy description. Superior Court Associate Justice David A. Wiseman labeled the accompanying court hearing as bizarre - but the word might just as well apply to the entire episode surrounding Attorney General Edward T.

Buckingham's departure from the CNMI.

Buckingham announced his resignation on Thursday, 8/2, was served a penal summons - despite avoidance actions on his part (e.g., making use of a police escort to and through the airport to the plane) - on 8/4, departed the CNMI the same day, announced the withdrawal of his resignation on 8/5, and on 8/6, due to his non-appearance in court, became the subject of a bench warrant.

The doings raise a host of questions. How was the summons finally served? After the FBI agent who served it told one of Buckingham's escorts that he'd be charged with obstruction of justice if he stood in the way, as one version has it? or not until he finally got on the plane, as a second version has it? What is a penal summons, anyway? What other kinds are there?

If Buckingham is on leave, as the original announcement of his resignation said he was, isn't he entitled to representation in court by the government? What is the point of his attempting to withdraw his resignation? What does it do for him? Will there now be an effort to serve Wiseman's bench warrant on him in the states? Or will that wait in hope that Buckingham will return to face the charges against him in person?

What will happen to Buckingham's alleged escorts? One can't help but feel pity for the dilemma they faced when ordered to undertake such an illegal act, knowing they would lose their jobs if they refused. Who gave that order? More disturbingly, what does it say about the CNMI government, that such an order was issued to begin with?

And, central to it all, what was the governor's role in all this? More telling, however, is the question: what happens now? Whose head will roll? - or will anyone's?

That the whole affair ever made light of day is due to the enterprising efforts of KSPN2 reporter Tina Sablan, who was at the airport, together with her partner, in the early morning hours when Buckingham arrived with his police escort, and got pictures of the police, their cars, and the Buckingham's, despite harassment and physical jostling by the officers. Her courage and tenacity deserve gratitude, recognition and high praise from the entire community.

On an entirely different level, kudos also go to the Professional Licensing Board, in this instance for announcing its intent to amend its regulations for dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants and acupuncturists in the media. The notice appears in the *Saipan Tribune's* "Community Briefs." The text of the actual amendment appears in the latest issue of the *Commonwealth Register*.

Ordinarily, such notification of change are published only in the *Register* but copies of it are not widely distributed, nor is it available on-line - except by subscription - which makes it difficult for anyone to find out when or what additions and/or amendments to government regulations are being proposed.

It would have been nice if the newspaper announcement had included information as to just what was being amended, but at least the Board has given public notice - a notable first in improved

access to the *Register*. Currently the only access is to its generally uninformative table of contents through the CNMI Law Review Commission's webpage < <http://www.cnmilaw.org/welcome.php> > (just click on "legal documents" and then on "Commonwealth Register").

It would also be nice if other government agencies followed suit, and announced proposed additions and amendments to their regulations in the newspapers, instead of only in the *Register*.

Short takes:

- One wonders what "Casino" Jack Abramoff might make of this latest skullduggery in his old stamping grounds. Abramoff began his own radio talk show last month "to offer advice on reforming politics," as the *Huffington Post* put it. Interestingly, though copies of the fictional film of his dealings, *Casino Jack* are available on island, copies of the documentary, *Casino Jack and the United States of Money*, which includes interviews with numerous island residents, and was released several months earlier, apparently are not. To island newbies: Abramoff, a powerful political lobbyist hired by the CNMI to fight Congressional control over immigration and increases in the minimum wage, was eventually convicted of corruption and went to prison. He was released two years ago.

- The new fence around the Garapan school looks very nice, achieving its purpose to "make Garapan Elementary School 'more aesthetically and architecturally pleasing,'" as a *Saipan Tribune* story put it. But at an estimated cost of \$115,900 (final actual cost not known), one wonders whether the money might not have been better applied to other than mere cosmetics. That of course, is the illogic of grant money - it goes where creative grant writers propose, and not where, lacking creative grant writers, it might have done more good, been needed more.

- It might be seen as an imitation of the other paper, but one wonders why the *Marianas Variety* does not reveal its weekly poll in its hard copy edition. It might bring more readers to its on-line version, and would, no doubt, add to the total number of those polled. This week's poll asked, "Are you in favor of a pension obligation bond for the Retirement Fund?" At last count, the "no's" were in the clear majority.

- Now that it's too late to get it on the ballot, those wanting a change to Article XII might want to take a second look at just what they are trying to accomplish, and whether there aren't other alternatives for doing so. For example, diluting the percentage of Marianas descent will always be problematical. Might it not be better to define rights in terms of length of residency? And if those who want it abolished and those who merely want it changed could find a way to work together, maybe language could be found that both could accept, and the issue could make it to the ballot either in a special election or by the next election....

- Food for thought: if the CNMI can afford \$30 million to pay the interest that it has been calculated would be due annually on a pension obligation bond, why couldn't it just pay the \$30 million directly to the Retirement Fund?

- More food for thought: Bill Stewart's observation that "politics is the NMI's economic cancer."

- For those who have not seen the transcript of Judge Robert J. Faris' initial comments during the 6/27 hearing on proposed attorney fees in the Retirement Fund bankruptcy case, it is now on line at < <http://tinyurl.com/8vd7dfz> >, thanks to Glen Hunter's retiree blog.

- The CNMI's Manny F. Borja and two linguists from the University of California at Santa Cruz will make a presentation on Chamorro language studies at the American Memorial Part theater

on Tuesday, August 14, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Subject of their talk: the possibility of an on-line version of the revised Chamorro Dictionary, and how Chamorro speakers understand the Chamorro language. Admission is free.

- The Saipan Chamber of Commerce is starting another round of free workshops for those interested in starting a business, as follows: "How to start a business," August 17; "How to write a business plan," August 24; "How to manage your business," August 31. All sessions are held at the Chamber office in the Familia Building, Garapan, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 am. Deadline for per-registration: noon of the day prior to the start of the session.

- An exhibit put together by the National Library of Medicine in Bethesda, Maryland, will be on display in the JoeTen Kiyu Library from August 14 - September 22. The exhibit, "A Voyage to Health," highlights the revival of native Hawaiian tradition and the legacy and revival of the voyaging tradition.