

On My Mind

12/3/99

Next Wednesday is Constitution Day - as my ex, who recently passed away, would have put it, a "holy" day surrounded by two days of infamy - Pearl Harbor on the 7th of December, and his birthday on the 9th - though he was talking about the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, which also falls on December 8th, as the holy day.

According to Don Farrell's history of the Marianas, the CNMI Constitution was actually signed on December 4th, 1976. The text of the original Constitution, long available in booklets sold by Marianas Printing, indicate that the Constitution was signed on December 5. Farrell says the 5th was the day that 54 copies (he does not indicate for whom the copies were intended) were signed. Only later, by a public law passed by the CNMI legislature, was the observance of Constitution Day moved to December 8th, a holy day of obligation on which many government employees took leave, providing double justification for the government holiday.

The Commonwealth Law Revision Commission has also published the text of the CNMI Constitution, including all the amendments proposed by the 2nd Concon and approved by the voters. The version available from Marianas Printing, it should be noted, does not include the amendments. Regrettably, the Law Revision Commission edition does not include two documents of historic significance that are in the version available from Marianas Printing. The first is the page of signatures to the Constitution. The second is the text of the proclamation issued by then U.S. President Jimmy Carter that the U.S. had approved the CNMI Constitution and declaring that it would go into effect on January 9, 1978.

Carter's proclamation also authorized the enactment of most of the provisions of the Covenant, in effect declaring the CNMI as a separate self-governing entity separate from the TTPI, as of that same date. And it was on that historic date - January 9, 1978, now celebrated as Commonwealth Day - that the CNMI's first governor, and first legislature, took their oath of office,

<center>* * *</center>

It is worth noting that not a single one of the many, many changes to the Constitution that were proposed by the 3rd Concon but rejected by the voters, has since re-surfaced. This would appear to indicate that neither the voters nor members of the legislature consider the proposed changes either important or urgent. Which is just as well.

The CNMI Constitution - a mere 23 years old - has already been amended more often than the 210-year-old U.S. Constitution. To preserve its integrity - and indeed, the stability of the Commonwealth - the CNMI Constitution should be protected and revered as the support and backbone of the CNMI. It should be modified only if and when its provisions create harm to the people or the community, and no other means is available to correct the problem.

If the Constitution is treated as no more permanent than the laws of the Commonwealth - which can be amended or repealed seemingly at the whim of the legislature - the entire structure of the

Commonwealth is at risk.

<center>* * *</center>

Speaking of risk, apparently no one thought about the risk to whatever turtles and fish are left in the lagoon when they came up with the idea of releasing 300 balloons into the air the other day. Balloons are a hazard to turtles, fish and sea birds, because in the water they look like jelly fish to turtles, like a source of food for fish and birds as well. But the balloons block the creatures' digestive systems, and no longer able to process food, the turtles, birds, and fish that swallow balloons starve to death.

This is not, in any way, meant to discredit or denigrate the occasion - observance of World AIDS Day - but there are other ways to mark such observances than to endanger habitats and wildlife. Though balloon scraps, largely unbiodegradable, are not pretty when found on land, they do not seem to pose the same hazards as they do when they reach the water. Massive releases of balloons on islands in general, and in the CNMI in particular should be banned, made illegal.

<center>* * *</center>

In another vein entirely, the number of funny, punny, raunchy, inspirational, romantic items circulating via e-mail - and no doubt the internet as well - appears to be limitless. Some, of course, are better than others, but one could easily fill one's day just finding and reading them, making selective lists for passing the right one on to the right friend or family member. Unfortunately, all too often what gets lost in the process is the name of the author, who misses out on getting any credit for his or her well-chosen words.

One of the more recent I've received - a version of which made Ann Lander's list of most-repeated letters - seems particularly appropriate at this time of year. With apologies to the author, whom I don't know, and therefore to whom I can't give credit, herewith:

<center>Dance Like No One's Watching</center>

We convince ourselves that life will be better after we get married, have a baby, then another. Then we are frustrated that the kids aren't old enough and we'll be more content when they are. After that we're frustrated that we have teenagers to deal with; we will certainly be happy when they are out of that stage.

We tell ourselves that our life will be complete when our spouse gets his or her act together, When we get a nicer car, are able to go on a nice vacation, when we retire.

The truth is there's no better time to be happy than right now. If not now, when?

Your life will always be filled with challenges.

It's best to admit this to yourself and decide to be happy anyway.

One of my favorite quotes comes from Alfred D Souza.

He said, "For a long time it had seemed to me that life was about to begin - real life.

But there was always some obstacle in the way, something to be gotten through first, some

unfinished business, time still to be served, a debt to be paid.

Then life would begin.

At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life."

This perspective has helped me to see that there is no way to happiness.

Happiness is the way, so treasure every moment that you have.

And treasure it more because you shared it with someone special, special enough to spend your time with...and remember that time waits for no one.

So stop waiting until you finish school, until you go back to school, until you lose ten pounds, until you gain ten pounds, until you have kids, until your kids leave the house, until you start work, until you retire, until you get married, until you get divorced, until Friday night, until Sunday morning, until you get a new car or home, until your car or home is paid off, until spring, until summer, until fall, until winter, until you are off welfare, until the first or fifteenth, until your song comes on, until you've had a drink, until you've sobered up, until you die, until you are born again, to decide that there is no better time than right now to be happy. Happiness is a journey, not a destination.

Thought for the day: "Work like you don't need money,

Love like you've never been hurt, And dance like no one's watching."

<center>* * *</center>

As the battle of the budget goes on, here's another thought for the day: "Teachers are to education what doctors are to medicine: the industry's only essential ingredient." The quote comes from a Jack Anderson column reprinted in the <I>Marianas Variety</I> yesterday.

<center>* * *</center>

And last but not least, no one's called me on it, but I should not have generalized about the content of Duty Free Shoppers' stores (I guess they want to be known as DFS?). The shops in the individual hotels do not all carry the same thing, nor do they all carry what the main Garapan store does. In fact, one I found myself in the other day had some rather nice things to offer as souvenirs.