

On My Mind
3/05/10

Many thanks to *Marianas Variety* reporter Gemma Q. Casas, for not repeating Bruce Jorgensen's comments regarding yours truly in her story about him that appeared earlier this week.

In an e-mail to Casas, Jorgensen - who has filed suit in Federal court against the CNMI Retirement Fund - wrote, apparently in response to a query from her, "*As for the "character assassination" [sic] tact[?] most recently precipitated by so-called CRA Board Members/cronies (themselves facing likely claims as to malfeasance in former capacity as Fund officials) as published by Ruth Tighe... ..well, let's start out by considering...hmmmmmm...is not Charles Reyes Jr. related via blood as a grandson to Ruth Tighe (and, if so, does that not say it all)..."*

Later in the same e-mail, Jorgensen wrote: "*...perhaps the difficulty with folks like Ruth Tighe is that they remain unwilling to recognize/acknowledge that as U.S. misfits having lived in the CNMI for many years, the very legacy they (and many upper echelon retirees) have provided to the CNMI is...just what...an utterly dysfunctional CNMI government which has forced CNMI multitudes (especially the young) to flee the CNMI in favor of the U.S.....or even for Ms. Tighe herself to flee to the U.S. for cancer treatment in lieu of treatment at her "legacy CNMI healthcare facility" ...CHC...as has BenTan himself... "* [ellipses are Jorgensen's]

Casas could have repeated some of this, or alluded to it in one way or another. That she did not speaks well of her sense of ethics, her common sense, her professionalism.

Admittedly I've only got half the story, in that I have not seen the proposal submitted by the Public School System for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds, but I have seen the Invitation for Bid that PSS issued using those ARRA funds - for enough lap-top computers (some 5000+) to give one to every single high school student in grades 10-12 in public and private schools on Saipan, Tinian and Rota. The bid was opened on Thursday.

The Invitation for Bid included no requirement that PSS teachers receive training in how to take advantage of the fact that their students will now all have computers, together with access to the web. The IFB gave no indication where, how, when, the teachers would be helped to adapt their courses, their class activities, their homework assignments. Neither did the IFB include any provision for teaching the students how to care for their computers, how to use them, how to conduct a search and evaluate the results, how to compose and edit their writings, how to use a spread sheet. It says nothing about protective measures, like recording serial numbers linking computer and student. (Will pawnshops be put on alert about them?)

Maybe the application that PSS submitted for ARRA funds addresses all those

concerns. Unfortunately, the initiator of the idea was off-island this week, and unavailable for comment.

It does, nonetheless, boggle the mind that every single CNMI high school student in grades 10-12 will be given a computer, for free, and be allowed to take it home.....

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is at it again - now it is considering clearing the Marpi airfield area to rid it of unexploded ordinance. The area in question stretches from the Last Command Post all the way to Banzai Cliff - an unpopulated area now largely covered in tangentangen and used by some farmers to graze their cattle. It appears to include the Banzai memorials and the Veteran's cemetery.

The USACE announcement appeared as a full page notice in the 3/3/10 issue of the *Saipan Tribune* as a "request for information" about past activities related to Marpi Point Field. It did not include a deadline for submittal of comments. Its Site Inspection Report, announced as available at the JoeTen Kiyu Library, did not show up until nearly a day and a half later.

According to the report, the purpose of the site inspection was to evaluate the potential presence of munitions and explosives of concern at this formerly used defense site. A cursory review of the 3" thick report did not reveal why this has become an issue at this point, some 53 years after the site was abandoned.

The evaluation was done primarily through examination of soil samples for traces of munitions, explosives and munitions constituents such as antimony, copper, lead, zinc, and aluminum. Also taken into consideration was the ammunition found in previous site visits. The report states that though the explosives might present a residual hazard, and the metals are at a level "above human health and ecological screening levels....Immediate removal action is not warranted."

However, the report concludes that since "an unacceptable human health risk is possible from exposure to MC (munition constituents) in surface soil at this MRS (munitions reponse site)" and that "an unacceptable risk due to exposure of ecological receptors to antimony, copper, lead, and zinc in soil is possible at this MRS," the Marpi Point Field is "recommended to proceed to Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study status."

Just what such a further investigation will involve is not clear. Contact regarding the study is Helen Takemoto, project manager, USACE, Honolulu District. Phone number: 808-438-6931; e-mail: <FUDS-POH@usace.army.mil>.

Short takes:

The coconut wireless has it that despite peoples' strong feelings that locals should prevail wherever and whenever possible, this does not apply to the position of Federal District Court judge. The sentiment seems to be that only an outsider could be fair and impartial in that position. Both the governor and the CNMI non-voting representative to

Congress have nominated locals for the post.

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At a point where flex-time, working at home, shared jobs and similar non-traditional work strategies are increasingly accepted as effective tools for generating improved job productivity and greater employee satisfaction, the governor's draconian (according to the *American Heritage College Dictionary*, 4th ed: exceedingly harsh, very severe) edict that CNMI work hours are from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. seems so out-of-date as to be laughable. The "Directive," which appeared in this month's *Commonwealth Register* makes no exception for employees at hospitals, schools, the Department of Public Safety, the Emergency Management Office. It even threatens sanctions against the timekeeper, employee, department head if its edict - which also prohibits the use of leave time in the place of work hours - is not followed. A wonderful example of ill-advised micro-management at its worst!

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The governor's second edict of the month, establishing a "Policy Adoption Protocol," - which also appeared in this month's *Register* - seems equally ill-advised. Without a definition of what constitutes policy, the elaborate rigamarole describe for getting "policies" approved doesn't seem very workable. Are there any policies in effect now that meet the criteria spelled out in the "Directive"? Doesn't the man have cabinet meetings? Doesn't he talk to his agency heads? Can't he enunciate policy?

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With the coconut wireless overflowing, practically, with tales of abuse of ARRA funds, seems it would behoove the federal government to find ways to impose far more stringent controls and requirements on just how those funds should be spent by the CNMI, be they formula or competitive grants.

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The question arises as to what it is that all those favors, that the governor is dispensing, are buying. Can't be votes - he can't run for governor again. Loyalty to the Covenant party? But party loyalty, on its own, doesn't usually go very far..... Guess I'll have to re-read my Machiavelli.

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Personal progress report, for those interested: I've begun walking again - and managed a mile along the Marpi path earlier this week - it's beautiful, flat, paved, shady and conveniently close, but a hazard nonetheless in its present debris- and leaf-strewn state. I did have someone else along to tow my oxygen canister, without which I would not have managed!