



From the Publisher
Arnold G. York

What is going on?

I can't remember a time when the entire world seemed to be falling apart like it is today. You read the newspaper or dial up the morning news on your iPad and at least half a dozen countries are simultaneously fighting each other, threatening to fight each other or splitting apart in an endless stream of sectarian violence. Something big is happening.

For one thing, major Western powers — meaning the U.S. — and other European powers are seeing an ebb in influence. Consider that we sent more than 100,000 of our troops to Iraq, spent close to \$1 trillion training and equipping their army, knocked off Saddam Hussein, and what we got back was an army that collapsed at the first sound of a shot from some startup outfit called ISIS. We also got back total instability, the Shias and Sunnis at each other's throats, a government that doesn't function, and everyone mad at us, first for coming in and later for leaving.

In case you think that was an isolated incident, just look at Afghanistan and about all you can say is ditto. Same problems, same outrageous costs, same unsuccessful result.

What lessons can we draw from Iraq and Afghanistan? In today's world you can't go into a Muslim country, even if you're invited in, without going from liberators to occupiers in a nanosecond. So, the answer is to stay the heck out, unless you've got a lot of allies going in with you. Then, you'd better have a very quick exit strategy.

As for the rest of the Arab world, it looks to me very much like Europe in the 1500s when Martin Luther came along, and for the first time in 1,000 years the power of the Catholic Church was challenged. It took Europe almost 200 years to work out that revolution or evolution, and there were lots of wars, purges and genocides before it finally resolved itself into a sort of peaceful co-existence. There is absolutely no reason to believe that the Arab world of Egypt, Syria, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Iraq, Iran and a number of others aren't going to go through their own century or two of failed governments,

overthrown democracies, crazed theocracies, Caliphates, dictatorships and leaders that are just plain evil.

Why the Arab Spring is happening now isn't at all clear, but what is clear is that something very large is happening, it's not something we can fix, or delay, or even pick the winners, despite what Fox News may want us to believe. I suspect the next dozen American presidents are going to have to deal with a changing Arab world and what our response to it should be.

Now, let's deal with the present and what we can do about it. As I see it, there are three major problems:

First, Putin wants his empire back. He's not going to get it. For him, the Crimea was easy. But the rest of the Ukraine is proving to be a lot tougher. He's sponsoring a civil war in the East, but like any war, it could quickly get really expensive in rubles and manpower. The Ukraine could be his Iraq. He already knows what Afghanistan cost Russia before we were stupid enough to take it off their hands. I doubt that he wants a replay of that. We also need to help Europe find energy so that they're not beholden to Russia, which now holds many of the energy cards, but that could change with smarter American policy.

The second major problem is Gaza. The best we can expect is a prolonged truce, no more rockets or tunnels, with some supervised rebuilding of Gaza and some significant international aid, again supervised and controlled. In time, Hamas will either change its objectives, get pushed out or evolve into a real government. In the meantime, many people will be injured or killed. What's going on in Gaza right now is a war, and what's most striking is unlike most wars, no one is taking any prisoners. This is apparently a war to the death because both sides see it as a war for survival.

Lastly, the largest problem of our future is the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Twenty years from now there will be 20 more countries with nuclear bombs. We need a mechanism for controlling them because the survival of our planet depends on it.

Guest Editorial | John Sibert, Mayor Pro Tem, and Laura Rosenthal, Councilmember In pursuit of answers

With school starting in less than a month, many parents have contacted us about their concerns, fears and anxiety regarding the safety of Malibu High School and Juan Cabrillo Elementary School. Since we both have been working on this issue (John on the Environmental Task Force and Laura as a former MHS parent and Schools Subcommittee member), we decided to combine efforts. In phone calls, emails and meetings with district staff and school board members, we have been stressing a few important things.

First, we have tried to explain to the district the real fear and confusion so many people are feeling right now. Right or wrong, these are real and strong feelings and the district must respond to them. There is a great sense of urgency here with school starting so soon.

Secondly, we asked for a town hall/panel discussion with all of the major players — EPA, DTSC, Environ, the district, Malibu Unites and PEER. This meeting would be televised and mediated by an expert in these types of discussions. We want everyone at the same table so that an informed and factual discussion can take place. We need to get past communication by press release.

Next, we asked for 100% testing of high occupancy rooms (classrooms and offices) so that everyone would

have information about their student's rooms for this school year. We discussed the possible need to move students and teachers out of classrooms into re-locatables and the feasibility of doing that.

Lastly, we strongly urged the district to do a better job communicating to the parents and students of Malibu. It is time to move past defensive postures, incomplete disclosures and un-kept promises. Transparency and full disclosure are very important to try to get back the trust of the Malibu community. Testing results, plans and procedures all must be done first and foremost with the safety of children and teachers in mind. We need to insure strict adherence to EPA and DTSC requirements and everything must be communicated in a clear and simple way that we can all understand.

As Councilmembers, we have no direct power or control over the school district, just as the school board cannot make decisions for our city. However, we can act as a conduit between all the parties, communicate what is happening in Malibu and urge them to respond and take action. That is exactly what we have been trying to do and will continue to do. We are committed to finding solutions and getting answers for all the residents of Malibu.

Letters to the Editor

The Malibu Times requests that letters to the editor be sent by U.S. mail or hand-delivered to The Malibu Times, 3864 Las Flores Canyon Rd., Malibu, CA 90265; e-mailed to malibunews@malibutimes.com or by fax to 310.456.8986. Name, address and phone number must be included with all letters for verification purposes. Typed letters must use sentence case (please avoid submitting correspondence typed entirely in capital letters or in cursive). Letters should be brief, 350 words maximum, and may be edited for clarity or length. Deadlines are Tuesdays at noon.

Due to a large volume of letters sent to The Malibu Times regarding the schools, additional letters will be available at malibutimes.com.

Four goals

The following was sent as a letter to City Council.

I would like to add my voice to what I know is a growing chorus of concerned parents exhorting you to take action on behalf of our kids. My wife Melissa and I have a son going into seventh grade at MHS. Due to concerns about the safety of his sixth-grade classrooms, he spent most of last year being taught at Juan Cabrillo. Can you imagine how sickened we were to learn that he was moved into a room whose caulk toxicity is among the worst in the nation? Worse than the class from which he was removed. And this fact had to be uncovered by Malibu Unites because the SMMUSD wouldn't pay to test the caulk. Outrageous.

To add insult to injury, Sandra Lyon has the gall to respond to this revelation with a complaint that the Juan Cabrillo samples were taken "surreptitiously." Who cares? Our classrooms are toxic. A year has been lost. It's time for you all to do the right thing and help us realize these four goals, as enumerated by Malibu Unites:

1. Provide a PCB-free alternative for students and teachers, effective August 19, while:
2. testing caulk in all pre-1979 classrooms (test sources). (This was the EPA's request in its Jan. 27 letter to Lyon.)
3. Remove all PCBs that violate TSCA (50 ppm). (In Jan. 27 EPA letter.)
4. Re-allocate Bond BB and ES to remediate or build classrooms free of toxic chemicals like PCB, lead and asbestos.

Thanking you in advance for your efforts to keep our students and educators safe.

Joshua Malina

Baby girl

The following was sent as a letter to Superintendent Sandra Lyon.

My daughter turns 11 today and my wife wrote in her memory book,

"You have been my eternal sunshine, my darling baby girl." Everybody who has been or will be exposed to PCBs on the Malibu High School and/or Juan Cabrillo Elementary School campuses is somebody's baby girl or boy.

That is why we cannot simply accept the district's assurances that both campuses are safe.

I do not doubt that Superintendent Lyon, the school board and their advisors are making their best faith efforts to assure that our children are safe. I do not doubt that they truly believe our children will be safe under their plan. But that is not good enough. Nobody should ask a parent to send their children into a situation of potential harm unless that parent believes the child will be safe. We understand that on something as simple as field trips. Why is it so hard to extend that same understanding to the schools themselves?

And this is what we at AMPS and, I believe, the vast majority of Malibu's parents are asking of the district: include us in this conversation. You need to come to Malibu and hold open, public, town hall meetings, starting in the next week or two. Get a moderator if you think that helps. But stand in front of the parents; tell them of your plan and your thinking. Listen to their questions and concerns. See where you need to change your views. See where you can persuade parents of the logic of your position.

Our community is in agony now. You are asking something that we cannot do. You are asking that we trust you to decide how much is enough when it comes to frightening contamination. We need more. We need to talk to you, to hear your logic, to question your assumptions. We need you to hear us. We need you to work collaboratively with us to find a solution that meets the needs of our community.

It is not ok that so many people have been thrown into such worry. Please honor this request. Please meet with the community, all members of the community who choose to attend. Please stand in a public form and present your research and your plan. Earn our confidence. Be good stewards of our trust. Do it

soon and until the conversation is complete.

Craig Foster
President, Advocates for Malibu
Public Schools Foundation

Getting SMMUSD into gear

I am a concerned parent new to Malibu. We have five children—two-and-a-half to 14 years old. They should go to nursery school and then two at Juan Cabrillo and two at Malibu Middle. One has special needs, so we are very familiar with school districts and their lack of speed or interest unless pushed into a corner by mediation or legal action. The current toxic issue is not being taken seriously by SMMUSD. They are going to play games to safeguard their liability. This is the first school district in California to report PCBs, so a correct and safe precedent needs to be set. What is plan B?

The tours offered are a waste of time, unless you want to see the school being cleaned and desks with chewed gum underneath. The tours are a way for the SMMUSD and principals to try and reassure us that everything is

OK. They are not doing thorough testing and they don't have an immediate action plan for remediating the PCBs. PCBs are toxic and if they are over 50 ppb, by law, they must be removed.

The parents who say, "my child is OK" or "my children went through Juan Cabrillo and MHS with no problem" are being complacent. The chemical load we all walk around with as we absorb environment toxins daily may not harm us now but they will in the future, especially when women give birth. I don't want my children or grandchildren affected. I would not wish Autism on anyone. It is a challenge that is life-long, and one of the hazards of PCBs. Sure there are lots of environmental hazards we come in contact with daily but if we can change that, why wouldn't we?

The SMMUSD should err on the side of caution and over-test to get ahead of the crisis and growing distrust.

The parents in this community

are amazing; many are involved with Malibu Unites. Malibu Unites is working to get the accurate information out to the community. The ramifications of not doing this right will affect other schools in the state, so we must not give up. We all need to be the squeaky wheels that make a difference for the sake of our children's and teachers' health, and so that SMMUSD listens and acts.

Tara Buran

Give me your tired...

Ten or 12 people protested on PCH against immigrants last week, part of a series of demonstrations across the country. Identical Tea Party mailings went out in cities across the nation, urging these protests. (I'm on several lists in several states, and the wordings are identical.)

When I was a boy, I learned of the ship St. Louis, which carried a manifest of Jews from Nazi Germany to Cuba in 1939. Both Cuba and the United States refused the Jews refugees status. "They are diseased;" "they don't have visas;" "they should apply and wait in line." Those were the calls in Congress, in newspapers and on radio from certain quarters.

The ship was turned back across the Atlantic. The passengers went to concentration camps. Mindful of my German and American heritage, I never forgot this sad and sordid piece of history. And I always wondered, what would I have done in 1939? Stood silent, rather than risk

the anger of those shouting about immigrants? Raised my voice in support?

Now, we see little kids—babies, mothers, boys and girls—fleeing for their lives. They are crossing our border and turning themselves in to the first federal officer they see.

Are we going to stand on the docks and deny them safety? Are we going to let the loud Tea Party minority repeat 1939?

Hans Laetz

What if ...

If the Reiner Initiative only was better crafted.

If the City Council was less opaque.

If the City government would govern.

If more Malibu residents would care.

If pigs would fly ...
Sam Hall Kaplan

Welcoming refugees

I was sickened when I saw the photograph of the protest against child immigration on the front page of last week's Malibu Times.

The best quote of the article says, "There is a long, sad and shameful tradition in the United States in using fear of disease, contagion and contamination to stigmatize immigrants and foreigners."

I only feel compassion for these refugee children, especially the sick ones, because I know of the hard-

ships and strife and fear they are facing in their home countries.

Maybe it is because of my father's story of escaping the revolution in Russian as an eight-year-old boy by walking across China for five years with his mother and two brothers, only to be unrecognizable because of starvation when he did reach America.

Remember, "A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame is the imprisoned lightning and her name Mother of Exiles. From her beacon hand glows world-wide welcome."
Valerie Sklarevsky

Unsafe conditions

Wait, what? The Kanan Rd. arrester bed project was for safety, right? Now there is no shoulder or bike lane on northbound Kanan. Anybody see a puzzle here? The project should not be considered complete until current California road standards are followed.
Jonathan Toker

New responsibilities

Approval of commercial development always requires some subjective decision making, primarily because developers want special permission to build projects that aren't within the code of our Land Use law and because of Coastal permitting requirements. Currently those decisions are made by the majority of five Planning
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