



ANTI-SEMITISM ACCUSATION LOW BLOW IN DA'S RACE

When I was seven years old, my religious school class went on a field trip to Catalina Island, for reasons I cannot recall. I do remember having a good time until the owner of a souvenir shop loudly whispered to a customer that we were "that group of Jew children."

While the remark could have been construed by some as rude but innocent, I knew deep inside that something was very wrong and unbelievably scary from something more than the words—more frightening than the constant threat of nuclear war that invaded our young consciousnesses throughout the 1950's.

This was my first encounter with anti-Semitism. Suddenly, with that one remark, the ghosts of ancestors who suffered pogroms and ostracism yanked away the warm security blanket my parents had provided by choosing to live in a predominantly big city Jewish community.

So profound was the experience that I, like many other Jewish kids, developed finely tuned antennae for the real thing, which really is not about words, or political turf battles, but about the fabric of encounters. It is as much about attitude, as about illegal job and housing discrimination

And so, I feel much like the painter Edvard Munch's Screamer when now and then some members of San Diego's Jewish community tar people in public life who disagree with them as anti-Semitic.

Several years ago, the Carmel Valley Planning Board, including several Jewish members, were publicly and privately accused of anti-Semitism for doing their job when they opposed an overly intense land use plan for a synagogue and school, just as they would do with any project that shoehorned in too much in too small a space.

Incidentally, these were some of the same board members who worked overtime helping the Jewish Academy, which came with a great land use plan for a school on very environmentally sensitive land, to navigate the treacherous Coastal Commission approval process.

And so I screamed again last week when people close to the Dumanis for District Attorney campaign distributed a deposition taken in an employee disability discrimination lawsuit against the County to reporters and opinion makers containing assertions from a Deputy District Attorney, a Dumanis supporter, that District Attorney Paul Pfingst made anti-Semitic remarks 17 years ago when he was a Deputy DA.

That the deposition was handed out five weeks before an election in a campaign short on policy and long on

relentless character attacks against Pfingst jaundices the Dumanis campaign's efforts to distance themselves from this bizarre release of court documents shamefully reproduced on the pages of the highly respected San Diego Jewish Press Heritage and waved about by talk radio's conservative Rick Roberts.

The story came as a shock to one Jewish reporter whose kids play with the Pfingst children. It came as a bigger shock to Pfingst's long-time campaign consultant, Larry Remer, who is Jewish, and for that matter Sheriff Bill Kolendar, also Jewish and a Pfingst supporter.

And I am sure no one was more thrown back than Paul Pfingst, whose grandfather was Jewish.

Most of our Jewish neighbors and politically connected folks around town who I contacted this week for reactions had thankfully not heard about this latest volley in one of the nastiest campaigns in recent memory, although they certainly will soon if Dumanis supporters have anything to do with it.

One who did read the news stories called the accusations "sleazy." Another was appalled that testimony from a deputy district attorney who contributed to both Dumanis and another Pfingst opponent during the primary could be taken seriously without corroboration from politically neutral parties.

Morris Casuto, director of the San Diego County Anti-Defamation League, an organization that tackles the real thing, wondered to one reporter how such blatant statements such as those alleged in the deposition would not be known before now, a month before the election.

Paul Pfingst and his family live here. Certainly a public figure like this District Attorney, who can be described as anything but shy about sharing his views with anyone who will listen, would have revealed tendencies a lot sooner on the streets and in the neighborhoods of Del Mar.

A recent survey conducted by the Anti-Defamation League revealed an 11 percent increase in the number of Americans holding serious anti-Semitic beliefs, mostly among undereducated and recent immigrant populations, reversing a ten year decline. Now, this is something to worry about.

We have enough problems with hate in the country without inventing more to advance a narrow political agenda or to elect anyone to office.