

Portia Cohen

Mayor

City of Manhattan Beach

Sunday, March 29, 2009

**Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization
Remembrance Brunch Keynote Speech**

Good morning.

I am honored to speak before you -- the victims, families, friends, advocates and educators, of the human health harms caused by asbestos.

I was asked to speak today in my capacity as a policymaker, an environmental protection lawyer, and as a friend....

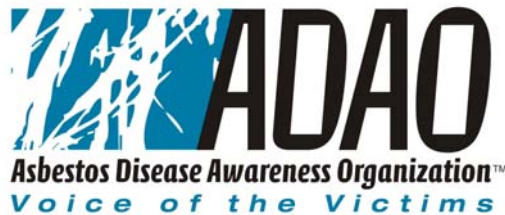
Allow me to share with you the story of a special friendship.... I had the great pleasure of meeting Linda Reinstein back in 2002, when she and I had joined a local city leadership class.

The focus of the class was to introduce students to the workings of city government, and to prepare students to be effective leaders in both public and private enterprise.... For nine months, Linda and I toiled together with our classmates, learning the politics of small scale decision-making, and the idiosyncrasies of local movers and shakers.

Linda was a mover and a shaker from the get-go. Her natural muckraking and advocacy skills surfaced quite quickly, and she soon became a trusted advisor to all of our classmates. She and I bonded quite naturally during those days, and our friendship only grew in later years.

Less than a year following our graduation from the Leadership Class, in 2003, Linda and I found ourselves again on a mutual mission, but far different from our classroom days.

This mission would call for a kind of leadership from Linda -that I would not have to summon.... What happened was this: Our husbands, Andy and Alan, had met during the time that Linda and I had been classmates. When they had first met, each man enjoyed good health (or so we thought).... Then, one summer day in 2003, the four of us would bump into each other at Cedars Sinai medical center. Both of our fellow husbands had in common the same symptom: a nagging, persistent cough (that drove their wives crazy!). It took each of Linda and I to finally get these guys to a doctor. And there we all were -- completely coincidental -- in Cedars Sinai -together!



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The irony of this coincidence of site and symptoms is that my husband was first misdiagnosed with a fatal disease (lung lymphoma) ... and Alan was also misdiagnosed with an idiopathic condition.

Eventually both Andy and Alan were accurately diagnosed. Each had a rare condition - Andy, sarcoidosis; Alan, mesothelioma. The twist of fate was that sarcoidosis was not fatal for Andy. Alan's fate, as we well know, was quite different.

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Now, I had already known that Linda was a natural leader. But it was not until this fate had struck her husband Alan, that Linda's full strength and constitution revealed themselves.

As Alan's illness progressed, Linda would continue to take him out of the house, down to the Pacific Ocean of our little city.... to offer him the best breath of ocean oxygen he could inhale ... not to mention the views, to distract him from his body, no doubt..... I would also see Linda and Alan on the weekends at our local bagel shop. Linda would fetch bagels, while Alan sat outside the shop, amongst the local gathering. It seemed that Alan strived valiantly in attempt to realize some pleasure from the atmosphere and the food; but to those of us in silent and heart wrenching observance, Alan's physical suffering bore clear on his body and in his face. He was fading....

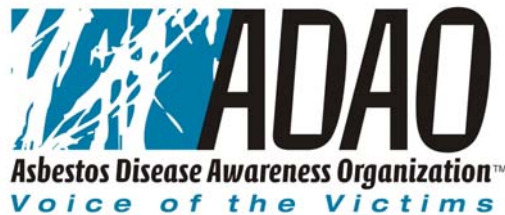
A special person who displayed amazing grace, at such a young age, was the beloved daughter of Linda and Alan, Emily.... Emily was only ten (10) years of age when she learned that her father had a certain type of cancer. At the age of 10, she could not pronounce the name of this disease, mesothelioma, let alone understand how her father developed it, what it would eventually do to him ... and in turn, to her.

Near the end of Alan's life, Emily and Linda would take Alan down to the beach, with his wheelchair, and oxygen tank. Together, they would push him along the Strand, so that he could take in the beauty of the horizon, and feel the breath of the ocean on his face.... A daughter and a wife, pushing along the man who served as their source of strength for so long....

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Through it all, Linda kept her chin up, and her wits about her, as Alan faded from her life and life itself.... When he passed, Linda revealed the pain and anguish she protected him from. But she did something with that anguish to help victims and to prevent more victims. Linda has channeled her anguish into the public domain. Linda and Alan's co-creation of ADAO in 2004, to educate, prevent, protect and to

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"United for Asbestos Disease Awareness, Education, Advocacy, Prevention, Support and a Cure"
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www.AsbestosDiseaseAwareness.org



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advocate for the eradication of asbestos for the benefit of all human beings ... is Linda's means to redemption. Her creation and investment, and her passionate devotion to ADAO exemplify a depth of leadership few of us will ever be called to muster.

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Linda has worked steadfast in Washington and internationally, to not only educate, but to propose and support laws that both compensate victims and loved ones for asbestos-related death and illness, and importantly, to prevent new victims from exposure. And while she and others have made great strides, there is still vast and dangerous asbestos exposure around the globe. Their work is not done....

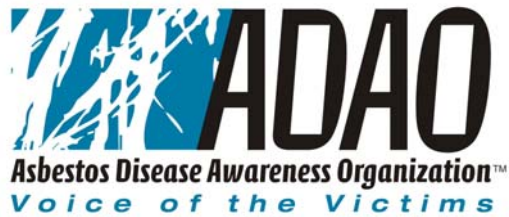
Now, as a local policymaker and a lawyer who spent years advocating for environmental polices that protect human health, I know that legislation is critical to asbestos protection and eradication.... The United States has not banned asbestos completely. Products containing up to 1% of weighted asbestos are still legal. Also, penalties for violation of asbestos laws have been insufficiently effective. Currently, the US House and Senate have yet to achieve a reconciliation of their bills, and vast differences remain between them. The situation is more grave internationally, especially in developing nations. But I believe in the power of local, grass roots movements. We have seen laws change from the bottom up; and it is worth every effort to try in this case, as well. Is a symbol of local support of ADAO's mission, it is my intention to introduce to my local Council a proclamation in support of the fight against asbestos. This particular proclamation seeks to educate Californian's about the derivation of asbestos. California ranks 5th in the Nation with the highest recorded number of asbestos-related deaths. Despite this alarming statistic, the California State Rock is Serpentine, the host rock of asbestos. In 1965, Serpentine was designated as the State rock to promote the lucrative asbestos mining industry. The time for change has come. ADAO, the John McNamara Foundation and the Pacific Heart & Lung Blood Institute have joined forces in a united effort to change the California State rock from Serpentine to a non-lethal rock. I will introduce to the City of Manhattan Beach the "Swap the Rock" proclamation, and it is my hope that the City of Manhattan Beach will join and support your mission.

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Thank you for choosing the City of Manhattan Beach to host your important conference. On behalf of the City of Manhattan Beach, we salute you, the ADAO and its supporters, and our resident and my dear friend, Linda Reinstein.

Peace & Health.

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