

Opinion

EDITORIAL

Technology in service of the wounded

It is a simple fact that wars are responsible for major improvements in medical treatment and care. In the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the quality of medical treatment in the field and the capability to do rapid medical evacuations allow medics to save wounded soldiers who otherwise would have surely died. A consequence of this lifesaving capability is that many soldiers come home missing legs and arms.

The development of intelligent artificial legs has been remarkable, but similar progress on artificial arms, which require finer, more complex movements, has been lacking. Now the Department of Veterans Affairs has announced a three-year clinical trial of what appears to be a truly amazing robotic arm, dubbed the "Luke arm" after the artificial arm given Luke Skywalker when his was lopped off in "The Empire Strikes Back."

At a demonstration of the Luke arm, the VA's director of prosthetic services, Frederick Downs Jr., did something he had been unable to do for 41 years, since he lost his left arm in Vietnam: He reached out, grasped a bottle of water, lifted it to his lips and, with his elbow and shoulder rising higher, tipped his head back and drank. The Washington Post reported that the feat moved him to tears.

The arm is a project of Deka Research and Development, a company founded by Dean Kamen, inventor of the Segway, and underwritten by the Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, the outfit that gave us the Internet.

The arm is wired to a series of sensors in a shoe and manipulated by the wearer's foot. Eventually, researchers hope to be able to wire it to the remaining nerves and muscles and someday perhaps the brain itself.

A DARPA statement says the goal is to develop a fully integrated replacement arm that will "perform tasks with the strength and dexterity of the natural limb." We say: Go for it.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Fundraiser concert performed flawlessly

Archway Recovery Services' "A Celebration of Recovery" concert/art show at the Fairfield Center for Creative Arts May 30 was a great success and I want to thank all those who were integral in the process of making it happen.

I refer to Green Valley promoter Jeff Trager as a mensch, which in Yiddish means "an upright, honorable, decent person, someone to admire." Jeff pulled the talented pool of musicians together and is responsible for the flawless way the evening came off. Archway is honored to call him a friend.

Thank you to all the amazing musicians! They were a fun, high-spirited group who put their all into an awesome, energetic show

that was musically precise and performance perfect.

I want to give recognition and sincere appreciation to the Fairfield Visual Arts Association and to all the artists who contributed to the art exhibit and let them know how deeply their works touched people. Creativity affects all of us, stimulates thought and conversation, contributes to healing, and touches the divine within us.

Tony Wade was a great emcee and did a great job of explaining the purpose and the heart of Archway Recovery Services and the work we do to restore lost men to themselves, their families and their community. We love you, Tony!

A big thank you to the dignitaries who supported our event and while I cannot mention every person who helped us but here are but a few: Senior Field Represent-

tative for State Sen. Lois Wolk Dawn Labar, Fairfield Vice Mayor John Mraz, Fairfield Councilmembers Catherine Moy and Chuck Timm, Suisun City Mayor Pete Sanchez, Suisun City Councilman Michael Hudson, and local education legend Mayrene Bates.

Special thanks to Bill Todd, whose ongoing friendship and support sustains us daily. Bill was responsible for \$1,000 in cash donations. Also, thanks to Paul Mulholland of Santa Cruz for a substantial donation and meaningful support to Archway staff and residents.

Finally, thanks to all who came to the event or who donated money, time, energy and effort towards its success.

Julie Lake
Founder and director of Archway Recovery Services
Fairfield

COMMENTARY

Cairo speech can't eradicate mistrust

Young in secondary school, I was a witty weenie with mind and mouth as my only means of defense and thus subject to a bit of terrorism.

A no-necked, hairy upperclassmen behemoth, dripping more testosterone than a Pamplona bull, had a fondness for quenching my zeal with "bowl baptism." One lesson learned was how people do nasty things when threatened and that superior reason is often as impotent in adolescent classrooms as it is in international politics.

That early lesson revisited when reading President Obama's ballyhooed Cairo Kumbaya speech. Was it good or bad and what is the role of rhetoric during tense international times?

Fortunately it was not solely another kowtow to the Sultan. However, thinly veiled apology was there.

Kumbaya choruses are fine, but American political tunesmiths should weave melodies of the miracles of our way of life. Ever hungry for the American motif, Europe gets it as their elections are indicating a profound shift towards the right center. However, Obama did not press Muslim political powers to sing along with democratic governance.

Yes, nations have the "right to choose their governance," but choice is not typical over there. Our presidents should be resolute that the best choice, the core principles most keeping with the nature of those governed and peace, is the one we represent.



Kevin Ryan

America can respect . . . "The right of all peaceful and law-abiding voices to be heard around the world," but not endorse systems antithetical to ours. Where, in those 6,000 words, was the articulation by the great-parenting president that there are practical consequences should petroleum or plutonium laden potentates not "unclench their fist(s)."

Failing to walk tall, replete with big sticks in the steps of our fathers, neither enhances our image nor impresses our enemies. Hinting at unilateral disarmament makes us look like a neutered pit bull in panty hose.

Let us not rewrite history or pretend there are not glaring difference in the American and Islamic world view and behaviors such as the treatment of women or those who disagree, the role of theocratic laws in daily life or life's purpose. Americans extol First Amendment rights; others issue fatwas.

Thinking magical words can usher in a rapturous "new beginning between the United States and Muslims . . ." is not naïve. It's narcissistic and arrogant.

Leading up to Cairo, we heard how we're not a predominantly Christian country and are one of the largest Muslim nations. This nonsense smacks of one man's personal hajj or angst. It is not presidential.

The immortal god of rhythm and grace, Fred Astaire, made the world seem to move around him when dancing. That was in film.

This is life, not the Obama blockbuster, "Flying Down To Cairo"

Where was the balance? Three thousand innocents lost their lives on 9/11 and it was denounced. Dancing in the streets afterwards was not.

Acknowledging our role in discord is honest but what of the seminal involvement of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union satellites in unsavory alliances. What of the freeing of the Iraqi people, our aide and assistance in the Balkans or that a Muslim citizen in the United States rightfully enjoys a paradise of privileges which we will fight to protect?

Muslim communities have a responsibility to themselves, their women and their citizens. Where has their enormous wealth gone in that regard?

If you stand for nothing you will lay down for everything. Decades ago I took a dramatic rhetorical stand against my terrorist. My words sizzled and sailed to the heavens, as I was dragged to the baptismal bowl once again.

However, the last time I landed a blow dirty and low. While assured I might then die, I vowed to never relent.

The Behemoth limped away and somehow, somehow I stand a much bigger man today. President Obama was right. "No single speech can eradicate years of mistrust."

Dr. Kevin Ryan is a retired colonel, physician, musician and author who lives in Fairfield. Reach him at ryan_k@comcast.net.

CALIFORNIA FOCUS

Convention not the best solution

No sooner were the latest special election results in than the call went out from the left to dump California's requirement of a two-thirds vote in both houses of the Legislature to pass a state budget.

Never mind that voters had just resoundingly defeated a tax extension plan that had barely won the needed two-thirds support from lawmakers. Never mind an April poll showing 70 percent of Californians want to keep the steep supermajority.

Asked what evidence there is that Californians want to get rid of the two-thirds rule for budgets, Rick Jacobs, chairman of the liberal Courage Campaign, which claims 700,000 members, came up with a complete non-sequitur:

"The special election had a very low turnout," he said. "The message there is that people don't feel things are democratic now."

That's supposed to indicate a groundswell of support for getting rid of the two-thirds barrier, which in recent years has let the relatively small Republican minority in the Legislature make tough demands that would have been laughed off without the rule?

And yet . . . there is no doubt the two-thirds rule produces perpetual late budgets and makes Sacramento decision-making more complex than in any other state capital. There is also some validity to the simple-majority argument, because that's what applies in almost every other matter except votes for tax increases both in local elections and the Legislature.

Let a simple majority decide matters, this argument goes, and if the voters don't like the result, they can throw the bums out.

Jacobs and others advocating an end to the two-thirds rule know they could change it via a ballot initiative, but they're not eager to try that route. Jacobs' excuse: "We need many changes and doing initiatives on one issue at a time may take too long." Translation: he knows a simple-majority proposition would lose.

Jacobs has joined the current call for a state constitutional convention to get rid of the two-thirds standard and make other changes. "A convention should be broad and diverse; it should look just like the population of California," said Jacobs. Does this mean he's suggesting racial, religious and political affiliation quotas for convention delegates? He doesn't say.

The fact is, no one now can say much about what a convention would look like or what it might propose (any new constitution would have to be submitted to the voters for a simple majority up-or-down verdict). Would it eliminate the Proposition 13 property tax limits? Would it remove privacy protections that now give Californians more abortion rights than apply in most other states? Would it set up a simple majority or some other standard for passage of budgets and new taxes?

The answers to these and many other questions can't be known until the convention goes to work, if it ever does. Which makes the entire notion a Pandora's Box better left unopened -- even if that does inconvenience Democratic politicians who would like the ability every year to ram through whatever spending plan they like.

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