

SANIBEL SHELL SHOCKED

Arguing My Way into the Argument Club

By Art Stevens

Somerset Run has a number of very appealing and personally rewarding clubs. I joined the Optimists Club and can now look at a glass that is half full and not half empty.

I joined the Whiners Club and can now mix it up with the most annoying and lethal whiners. And I am now about to join the Somerset Run Argument Club.

The purpose of this new club is to cleanse unhealthy emotions by yelling and screaming at people who are also yelling and screaming at you. But the Argument Club doesn't just take anyone in as a member. You need to go through a vigorous screening process.

I approached the door of the monthly meeting of the Argument Club. I could hear loud screaming and yelling from inside. Already this sounded like my kind of club. A representative of the club was standing at the door. He said: "What the hell do you want?" I said "I thought this was where the Argument Club meets, not the Verbal Abuse Club."

He said: "Very funny. I see that you're new here. If you want to participate you need to show me that you're an inveterate arguer before I can let you in. We don't tolerate amateur arguers."

I said: "Do you call that the beginning of an argument? My dog Flicker can argue better than you can."

He said: "You don't even know what an argument is. Let me spell it out for you. The dictionary defines an argument as

a discussion in which reasons are advanced for or against some proposition or proposal. What reasons are you advancing?”

I said: “That your definition of an argument is totally incorrect. An argument is a dispute where there is strong disagreement. I am arguing against your definition of an argument.”

He said: “How can you argue against my definition of an argument when I have the power and authority of the dictionary at my disposal?”

I said: “Well, I don’t know what dictionary you’re using but you must have read it wrong. You shouldn’t be arguing with me. You should just let me in.”

He said: “Why should I let you in if you don’t know what an argument is. There are some very capable arguers in that room and they would make mincemeat out of you. You should come back when you’ve learned the proper definition of argument and are prepared to argue loud, vehemently and obnoxiously.”

I said: “Look, you don’t even know which side of the sun is shining. You can’t just bar me from a meeting of the Argument Club without a better reason than that. You’re just plain wrong and you happen to be a lousy arguer. I’ve seen ten-year-old boys argue better than you.”

“Well, as it happens, we don’t invite ten-year-old boys into our Club. This Club is for adults only. And if you’re not an adult you can just go to another club, like the Belch and Burp Club.”

This twerp was really beginning to get to me. “I demand to speak to the president of this club. I have practiced arguing for months now to prepare myself to become a member. I’ve argued incessantly with my wife about her having picked the

Boston Red Sox to win last year's World Series. I've argued with the police officer who pulled me over for no reason at all. I've argued with the IRS about deductions they claim I shouldn't have taken. I'm a seasoned arguer and demand to be let in."

I could see him wavering as I wore my emotions on my sleeve. I couldn't imagine any arguer being more obnoxious than me.

He opened the door and said: "I'll let you in but only as an apprentice arguer. You need to be more contentious, uncivil and pompous. These are important criteria in our Argument Club. But I can see that you may be able to rise to the occasion if one of our members baits you enough. Go on in."

I finally felt redeemed and entered the room. There were dozens of loud arguments filling the room and I was ready to take my rightful place in the wonderful and emotionally fulfilling world of arguments.