

SHELL SHOCKED

A Hurricane Named Arthur

By Art Stevens

Hurricane Matthew did a lot of damage. Can you imagine how all the Matthews of the world now feel? Their friends are blaming them for the damage that was done.

Matthew, move over. You weren't the only person this happened to. I once got a hurricane named after me. And boy were my friends sore at me.

"Do you realize all the damage you've done? You've destroyed homes, created floods and generated mass terror and hysteria. You should be very proud of yourself," one Sanibel City Councilman yelled at me as we were ordering pizza with extra cheese at Island Pizza shortly after the storm.

As a long time member of the Arthur Club, I felt for every American with that first name. We meet annually to glow about the wonderful name we were given when entering the world.

We worship King Arthur at our annual bash and give thanks to our parents for having the foresight and vision to name us Arthur.

We honor famous Americans with the name Arthur, like Godfrey, Schlesinger, Lake (he played Dagwood Bumstead of Blondie fame in the movies) and Miller (Marilyn Monroe's famous playwright husband).

While many of us have given in to the many diminutive forms of Arthur, such as Art or Artie, in our hearts we know we're true Arthurs and have taken on the burden of upholding the tradition of our names.

Until Hurricane Arthur.

The roof came crashing down on us – literally. Many areas in the country were victimized by Hurricane Arthur. Who got the blame? Anyone named Arthur.

I even got a Facebook message from an anonymous resident of a Hurricane Arthur victimized region.

“How can you look at yourself in the mirror after what you did?” she wrote. “I’ve lost all my worldly goods including a 1938 Batman comic book, a Sibby Sisti baseball card and a Captain Midnight ring. Couldn’t you use your good name to do good deeds rather than evil ones? Couldn’t you have discovered a cure for the common pimple instead?”

I responded by pointing out that it wasn’t my decision to name a hurricane after me and that the National Hurricane Center selects first names on a random basis. I told her that the decision isn’t based on malice or prejudice but on a kind of lottery selection process.

I pointed out that Hurricane Matthew did far more damage and that those individuals with that first name are truly scarred for life and shunned by friends and family. But she would have none of it. To this Facebook devotee I am a Judas who betrayed the trust of those who thought me to be a kind, gentle, caring individual. I am now a destructive hurricane rather than a dignified human being.

To the chagrin of the Arthur Club, our name became infamous shortly after the hurricane. At the time many of us were seriously considering resigning from the club before we got more hate mail from weather battered citizens. Some of us were seriously thinking of changing our first names and sliding into a witness protection program. I was personally considering such new names as Slim, Tex, Buddy, A. J. and Spunky.

Even Art or Artie are too close a link to the name that we were seriously considering disowning and discarding.. The bad news is that Hurricane Arthur wasn't sufficiently devastating to warrant the safe removal of the name for future hurricanes by the National Hurricane Center. Names like Andrew, Agnes, Alicia, Allen, Allison, Anita and Audrey are considered fully retired. They may be done as hurricanes but are still available as names for newborn babies. Children bearing the names of retired hurricanes will no longer be subject to scorn and ridicule as they get older.

The National Hurricane Center has determined that the name Arthur isn't considered destructive enough to preclude another hurricane from bearing its name in six years. The Arthur Club has petitioned the Center to retire our name for the use of future hurricanes but to no avail.

The hurricane specialists there like the name Arthur and are holding onto it for some future catastrophe. In the meantime, Ana, Alex, Arlene and Alberto – you're on the list. You will be future hurricanes. Prepare yourselves now for scorn and ostracism.

And let's pray that the future Hurricane Ana will be nothing more than a mere wisp of a wind. And nothing compared to Hurricane Matthew.

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