

## SHELL SHOCKED

### Landmark Victory for Alligators

By Art Stevens

In a landmark decision, the United States Supreme Court, in a narrow 5 to 4 vote, declared today that alligator relocation from Sanibel to the Everglades is unconstitutional.

Reading from the majority opinion, Justice Clarence Thomas said that the rights of alligators had been systematically eroded during the past twenty-five years through a series of repressive laws passed by generations of Sanibel Island city government.

Civil rights forces throughout the country hailed the decision as a victory for minority groups and vowed they wouldn't rest until the courts also recognized the rights of jellyfish, frogs, egrets, wasps and pussycats.

The Supreme Court decision invalidated a Sanibel law which required alligators to be shepherded to designated areas out of the reach of human beings.

Speaking for the majority, Justice Thomas said: "It is the majority opinion that the rights of alligators, a beloved and endangered species, have been politicized by Sanibel governments to promote and foster vacation packages and tourism. Toward that end, alligators have become second class citizens with fewer and fewer rights.

"The constitution provides for the right of our citizens to congregate peaceably regardless of the size of our noses, the number of teeth, or the texture of our skin. What this decision means in day to day terms is that henceforth alligators will have the right to shop at Jerry's and sunbathe on public beaches without fear of reprisal."

In a prepared statement, Orville Alligator, president of the National Federation of Alligators, commented that the Supreme Court decision fulfilled a lifelong battle for equality by the Sanibel alligator population and made a show of force academic.

“We were prepared to exercise several options to demonstrate our determination to break the shackles that were binding us. The first option we considered was to chew our way to freedom. If the Supreme Court had voted against us, we planned to eat them.

“Another option we considered was a hunger strike. We planned to eat one human less a day until our cries for equality were heard. Fortunately, we did not have to exercise any of these options.”

The Sanibel City Council expressed dismay when told about the Supreme Court decision.

“Now that alligators have the same rights we do, think about how long the lines at Timbers and McT’s will be. If you think the wait was long before, you ain’t seen nothin’ yet.”

Those most affected by the decision are the island’s alligator relocators. At a crowded press conference at Ding Darling, Frank Buck, executive director of Local 31 of the Brotherhood of Gator Getters, issued a dire prediction.

“I truly wonder if the Supreme Court knows what it’s done. They sit there in their judicial chambers behind their judicial robes and don’t know what it’s like to come home and find an alligator in your chaise lounge.”

“We will now have to share our public facilities, restaurants, schools, beaches and even our homes with alligators. Soon our daughters will be dating alligators. Is this what the Supreme Court wants?”

In a show of symbolic unity, civil rights groups and alligators swam victory laps in the Ding Darling swamps together. Because of the suddenness with which the Supreme Court decision was made, a number of groups that will be affected have not had an opportunity to explore the full ramifications. For example, the airline industry declined to comment pending further analysis.

One airline official speaking off the record wondered if the decision meant that airline first class menus would now have to include bugs and insects.

Church groups wondered if the Supreme Court took into account the natural predatory habits of alligators.

“Alligators must learn to pray in a church, not swim in it,” one church elder soberly volunteered.

Extremist alligator groups were only partly satisfied with the Supreme Court decision however. Said one radical alligator while munching on a humanburger, “We won’t be satisfied until at least one alligator is appointed to the Supreme Court. Only then will we feel validated.”

Bennett Leatherhead, a spokesman for the Shoe Manufacturers Association, said that the decision seriously affected his industry.

“What’s high fashion without alligator shoes? Oh, well. We’ll just have to continue to be trend setters. But is the world ready yet for elephant shoes?”

#####