

## Shell Shocked

### Nudists have their rights too By Art Stevens

Have you heard about the latest civil rights battle going on on Sanibel ... the rights of sunbathers to lounge around in the altogether? A group of stark naked sunbathers was arrested recently for indecent exposure and civil disobedience. The naked sunbathers were not to be trifled with. They protested. They told the judge their civil rights were being violated. That they had every right to worship the sun in their own way. Fortunately, they didn't make matters worse. They wore clothes in the courtroom.

Their arguments seemed to make sense to the judge. He threw the case out. He said these folks were not doing anyone any harm by not wearing clothes; in fact, his judicial ruling seemed to encourage all of us to take our clothes off whenever we wanted. I went into a Sanibel restaurant recently, and the hostess asked me if I wanted the smoking or non-smoking section. I said I wanted the non-smoking nudist section. "*The what?*" she asked. I told her a judge recently ruled that public nudity was all right as long as it was done discreetly. She asked me how I could be discreet without any clothes on. I said that these recent judicial rulings opened the door for public nudity ... and soon after, in such places as public buses, sports arenas, supermarkets, city council meetings and courtrooms. Well, after a few words with the restaurant manager ... and an offer to compromise by garnishing with parsley, I was shown the door. They refused to be a guinea pig in this new wave of civil rights.

Of course, a number of Sanibel restaurants don't even permit the wearing of tank top shirts and sandals. How will they handle the new wave of public demonstrations by nudists who feel they have the same rights as smokers? There will come a time on Sanibel when all kinds of groups with narrow interests will protest that their civil rights are being violated. It won't be limited to nudists or smokers. For example, Sanibel's alligator population plans to ride on the coattails of the nudists and take their case all the way to the Supreme Court. Alligators will claim that the constitution provides for the rights of all citizens to congregate peaceably regardless of the size of our noses, the number of teeth or the texture of our skin.

If the Supreme Court rules in favor of alligators, they will have the right to shop at Jerry's, dine at Traders and sunbathe on our beaches. And if nudists, smokers and alligators take their respective cases all the way to the Supreme Court, can such other downtrodden minority groups as jet skiers, sky divers, snorers and vegetarians be far behind?