

ADVOCACY

by Ralph Liebing, RA, CSI
Cincinnati, OH

Maybe what we need is advocacy!

In many things, there comes a time when support--full support--and the like need to be ratcheted up to the point of advocacy. A parent at a Little League baseball game makes this adjustment primarily as their youngster gains skill, success, and really becomes a contributor to the team process. Then, it seems, the cloak of indispensability garners advocacy! Mom and Dad go full out--from sympathetic encouraging, to flat out passionate yelling--and to those most unfortunate instances where advocacy and sportsmanship become hostility.

But at the root of this is the fundamental ingredient of advocacy--loving something, or believing in something so deeply and with passion that mere support (moral, financial or whatever) tilt over and become more of a "cause" well beyond "strongly encouraging" but well short of confrontation. Something one is ready to go to the mat for!

Now this is not pumping oneself up or seeking greater vainglory, but rather it is a move to really get a point across, convincingly, and so passionately that we need to control ourselves. There is no movement toward hostility (if we do it right!) but rather a "yell" of sorts in lieu of a murmur--a firm handshake in lieu of a mere wave of the hand. A showing of understanding, and support well beyond tacit agreement.

In this there is no call for placard or banner waving, for protesting (who would we spec writers protest against any way--think about that) or blockades. Rather it is a thought that we really may need to do more--to move, as they say in sports, to a higher level (i.e., develop a new "A" game mentality).

Unprofessional, you say? No, not really. More along the line of tail-gating at a football game; the wearing of jersey with your favorite player's number; wearing a silly hat with team colors; oh, yes, and being one of the more vocal members of the gathering. An up-tick in our true, fundamental and deep caring about someone, some issue or something!

You know we really do this well--but only within our own group! We "yell" to convince the person in the next state, who is a member of an adjoining chapter. We "yell" to make our point with another who holds a differing perspective--more liberal or conservative (and not in politics!!!) We do great quibbling over a word or phrase; over how we do something as different from another (XX XX XX, XX XXXX, or XXXXXX?). Have you noticed how very noisy it gets in here (the specs world and discussion boards) from time to time?

We need to understand that "preaching to the choir" is one thing at one end of the spectrum. But at the other end is a thing called, "advocacy". A place where the whole choir, in wonderful harmony takes "song", melody, harmony and notes of expression to things held closely and dear, to things truly believed in and some places they've never been before! In a sense, the drive to share something known to be good, productive, and most helpful.

Where song becomes belief--and belief, advocacy!

An outreach, so to speak--well beyond the choir loft!

What are your thoughts? What is your list of *new* things that can and *should* be done?

After all, this is only one opinion!