ARROGANCE AND SPEC WRITING

by Ralph Liebing, RA, CSI
Cincinnati, OH

Did I just say that?

The question flashed through my mind as my colleague architects rounded the corner from my cube. She and he both went away satisfied with the information they asked for, but I am not at all sure that my "delivery" of it was sound.

I truly wanted to be firm yet re-assuring about my "opinion" based on my long experience, and the several times I have encountered similar circumstances. I did not intend to be aloof, lofty, pushy, pompous, pontifical or, uh--arrogant! I am not a know-it-all (who is), yet part of the reason I was even hired was the experience and background of teaching and practicing in all aspects of practice--from running work in the office and in the field, to contract administration in the fullest, with some design, a very good measure of spec writing, and a generous sprinkling of all the rest.

But none of that gives me (or any one similar to me) any inalienable right, special status, nor any come-upance on any person. Perhaps I can be helpful; perhaps I can help others avoid a cow patty here and there; perhaps I can give some insight, hint, or observation that influences, modifies, or enlightens the situation. That's my every day—my charge to myself! But none of that entitles me to arrogance either.

In a field where there is absolutely no right or wrong, Oh, there are a couple—we can be neither ABSOLUTELY right nor ABSOLUTELY wrong, to the point where we can impose on, and demand from any one! We all come to place where we develop and work with a set of criteria that is neither written nor memorized--it is "just there". We get more "there" through simply years of paying attention and eternal learning. In the end, though, our best scenario is pass that all along--give to and help others, who will add their "take" and pass it along to those still coming.

But arrogance? No, no place for it. How can we deal in absolutes when all around us is in flux, from day to day, and project to project? Who are we to impose "our way" (even when we participate in a collective manner) and then seek to justify it by being testy, overbearing, and -- yes--arrogant?

Firm but fair is good--in code administration and in any venue with others. Helpful but not dictatorially directive is also helpful where we are part of a team trying to reach a collective agreement. Even "devil's advocate" has a certain place at times, merely to awaken differential thinking and causing a pause for new deliberations--but slamming the door of arrogance shut--BAM!!

Really we are never too good; too wise; too expert to have the right to be arrogant. It is only others that empower us, and give us status, but absolutely no license to be arrogant. This is a personal battle that needs fighting each and every day. We may have a personality that easily grows arrogance, but even that must be controlled--by us--again no right comes with that. None!

Some will argue that this matter of arrogance is ethnic in nature; some say it is by geography; but mostly it is by personality, or being so bloody for so long, it is a defense mechanism to prevent being hurt yet again (I'm sorry for all those who had to travel that route). High intelligence, vast knowledge, wide/long experience, pushiness, pomposity, know-it-all-ism, overblown puffery, overbearing, hyper demeanor and pure (intended or not) intimidation carry no weight here--and neither does gross opinioning, where all else is made to pale before a determined, loud, expression of violable (and often unsupported) opinion.

No one wants to fight that battle; no one should even have to confront that situation.

I'm done--got to catch up with some folks and seek forgiveness!