

# ARETE

There are moments like this when I feel I possess that elusive quality known as class. More frequently, I am certain I don't. But I am aware that it is always available to me. Anyone can have class. It's character is nonetheless elusive.

In talking about class and trying to define it, one runs the risk of sounding silly and snobbish. For one thing, not only is class difficult to define, it is much more evident in its absence. Since part of class is not boasting about it, the no-class people stand out. For every class athlete you see, you can name any number of spoilsports, showboats, alibiers, and cheaters.

The Greeks have a word for it. ARETE means the best. ARETE also contains the idea of something, whether it be an object or a creature, doing exactly what it was made for. ARETE means the absolute embodiment of what it was designed to be. It is not being better than something else; it is the best of what it is. ARETE is me being the best possible \_\_\_\_\_.

THE IMPORTANT THING ABOUT ACTIONS IS NOT WHAT YOU DO BUT THE WAY YOU DO IT. "Every calling is great," said Oliver Wendell Holmes; "when greatly pursued." It is the old refrain all over again. HAVE NO CARE FOR THE OUTCOME. PLAY THE GAME TO THE HILT. SHOW A little CLASS.

The great ones, whether they are mechanics or cardiologist, waiters or housewives, always do. They have all those virtues and qualities that go with class. They also have faith—faith in themselves, faith in what they are doing, faith in those they do it with. THEY BELIEVE THE WAY THEY DO SOMETHING MATTERS, AND IN THE LONG RUN THAT IS ALL THAT MATTERS.

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN LIFE LIVED AS A SUCCESS AND LIFE LIVED AS A FAILURE, AS I SEE IT, IS A MATTER OF CLASS. CLASS IS A PRODUCT OF BODY AND MIND AND SPIRIT. I SUSPECT THAT FOR ME IT BEGINS WITH AN ALL-CONSUMING DESIRE TO DO MY BEST, A COMPULSION THAT EVERYONE HAS FELT FROM TIME TO TIME FOR DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES. MY TASK IS TO EXTEND IT TO EVERYTHING I DO.

*Taken from This Running Life, by Dr. George Sheehan*