

SOME COGENT COMMENTS ABOUT MY COLUMN ON GEORGIA

Sometimes, I don't understand the column-writing business. I can present a serious treatise about the impact of the International Monetary Fund on the price of cupcakes, or carefully analyze the three lucid thoughts our Ambassador to Outer Space Cynthia McKinney has had in her lifetime and I'll get nary a peep from you. But let me opine that Georgia is the prettiest place on earth, with the exception of Ireland, Scotland and maybe Montana, and the mail comes roaring in like Hurricane Ivan.

I wrote recently that I had secured a mountain retreat at Big Canoe in the North Georgia mountains. I was able to do this because I had promised The Woman Who Shares My Name that she could hang on to her St. Simons digs, also known as "Grandma's Beach House." Only in Georgia, I wrote, could one be blessed with such a balance of beautiful mountains and soft sandy beaches as well as the University of Georgia, the nation's oldest state-chartered university, located in Athens, the Classic City of the South. (Actually, I didn't mention UGA, but thought it would be nice to toss it in here.)

The reaction to the column was interesting, to say the least. The folks at Big Canoe were so delighted with my comments that they issued me a membership card in my brother's name and sent along enough rules and regulations to choke one of the bears roaming the nearby woods. Fortunately, if my well-known cantankerous streak gets me sideways with the rules czars, I can always blame it on my brother. It worked when I was a kid. It can work at Big Canoe.

Then, there were the letters. Many more than I expected. Most agreed with my assessment of the Great State of Georgia. Some, however, thought me a bit over the top in my enthusiasm. My friend, John from Bainbridge, a proud West Virginian, says our mountains can't hold a candle to West Virginia's. I wanted to ask him about West Virginia's soft sandy beaches, but like the overwhelming majority of my readers, John sounds a whole lot smarter than me, so I figured it best not to push my luck.

Geoff, from Wales (which I believe is located somewhere between Poland and Nova Scotia), wrote and informed me that Wales and England are just as pretty as Ireland and Scotland — he didn't mention Montana — and he sent me photographs as proof. From what I saw, he makes a good point. I got one piece of mail from Montana. The writer called me a "moron." Closer to home, Mo, who claims he graduated from UGA the same year I did, was totally unimpressed and said I was not "cogent." Mo may be right, but I suspect he is an imposter. Nobody I went to school with would have the foggiest idea what "cogent" means.

Delilah didn't like my comments at all. She says I ought to get out and see the world before bragging so much about Georgia. She has lived in Georgia for eight years and hates it. From what I could tell, Delilah wants to go back to California, which is okay with me if it's okay with California.

Delilah does make a good point, however. I should have mentioned that Georgia isn't perfect. We have Atlanta, where the manhole covers blow every time someone in the city flushes a toilet. We have ice hockey, the world's dumbest game. We have too many yahoos driving like maniacs in pickup trucks with tires larger than their IQs, and we have an ex-president who likes to undermine the current one, even though he was a lousy president himself.

Still, I can't think of a better place to live than the Great State of Georgia. In addition to beautiful mountains and soft sandy beaches, Georgia has peanuts, pecans, peaches, apples, sweet Vidalia onions, good barbecue and a lot of nice people who live here. Pardon me if I sound defensive, but if all of this isn't a cogent argument for why Georgia is the greatest place on earth, Mo and I don't know what is.