

## I CAN SEE THAT IT IS GOING TO BE AN INTERESTING YEAR

I don't know about you, but I am ready for 2004 to slip-slide right on out the door. Any year in which Ray Charles and Ronald Reagan die, but Osama bin Laden doesn't, has outlived its usefulness as far as I am concerned. It is time to move on.

As grumpy as 2004 was, is there any chance that 2005 will be any better? Good news. Your intrepid correspondent has spent many days and nights locked up in a broom closet consulting the ancient writings of the Druids, gazing at a slightly used crystal ball and relying on my always dependable dartboard. I now see the future clearly and I want you to see it, too. After all, what are friends for?

The first thing I see is that there will be no presidential election this year. That means we will be spared from looking at Michael Moore, listening to Howard Dean or caring about anything that Linda Ronstadt has to say. Oh, happy day.

I see Bobby Kahn, chairman of the state Democratic Party, being asked to resign in 2005 because the party is in shambles. Kahn will resist, saying, sure, the Democrats have lost the governor's office, both houses of the Legislature and both U.S. Senate seats in the past four years, but there have been some very positive developments. Kahn will cite the fact that our Ambassador to Outer Space, Cynthia McKinney, won back her seat in Congress and that she is sure to make all Georgians proud as punch by her words and deeds. Party leaders won't be swayed by Kahn's silver tongue, and will urge Sheila the Family Wonderdog to take Kahn's job and return the Democratic Party to its glory days. Sheila the Family Wonderdog will turn down the opportunity, saying, "I may be a dumb animal, but I'm not that dumb."

I see Howard Mead, who spent \$3 million of his own money in an unsuccessful race for the Georgia Court of Appeals, announcing plans to run for sheriff of Clayton County. Mead will spend \$9 million and will come in fourth in a two-person race. Mead will then become a political consultant and will make \$12 million telling candidates how to get elected to public office.

In the world of sports, I see the University of Georgia, the oldest state-chartered university in the nation, located in Athens, the Classic City of the South, a serious contender for the national football championship, despite having lost David Greene and David Pollack to graduation. Georgia Southern will also be in the hunt for the Division I-AA championship and Valdosta State will retain their Division II national championship. I see Georgia Tech going 6-5 (again) and playing in the Whatsit Bowl (again) and Tech fans getting mad and blaming me for everything under the sun (again).

Sometime during the year, I see a reader getting upset with something I write and demanding the paper quit running my column. That same reader, when queried by an opinion pollster, will say that one of the basic freedoms in our nation is the freedom of expression and that diversity of opinion is what makes this such a great nation.

I see the American Civil Liberties Union making a serious effort to eradicate all vestiges of religion in the country by the end of A.D. 2005. Then someone in the organization will figure out that "A.D." means "anno Domini," or "In the Year of Our Lord" and that our calendar is calibrated back to the birth of Christ. The ACLU will pitch a hissy fit and demand that all calendars be calibrated to the birth of Barbara Streisand, making next year 63 B.S. ("Barbarosa Streisandominimus"). As a result, the new calendar and everything else the ACLU does will be considered to be "b.s."

Whoa! What is this? I see a plate of corn-fried shrimp impatiently awaiting my arrival at the exquisite little Georgia Sea Grill on St. Simons Island. These little critters gave their lives for me. The least I can do is go thank them in person. I see that you understand. Happy New Year!