

## FLAGGERS SHOULD CELEBRATE ALL THAT IS GLORIOUS ABOUT THE SOUTH

Tweaking flaggers is like bearbaiting. There's not a lot of sport in it, and I only do it when I am too bored to pick on the blowhard city of Atlanta. In case you are not aware, flaggers are not imbued with much of a sense of humor. I reckoned in this space last year that with 2006 state elections upcoming, flaggers would have all the political influence of a dill pickle. Naturally, those comments drew a lot of chest-thumping mail which was not surprising. The surprise was that there were a few I could reprint without violating obscenity laws.

My favorite flagger response accused me of having a "liberal bias" (I'm not kidding)! It's times like that when I love this job. Liberal weenies get a major case of dry heaves whenever my name is mentioned, and some astute flagger thinks I exhibit a liberal bias. Is this a great country, or what?

Among the printable predictions I received from flaggers regarding the 2006 elections were these: "Georgia has replaced Barnes and Murphy, and about 50 others. Perdue is next in line." (Yeah, right.) "Our support is growing. You are reading the voters' attitudes wrong. November will vindicate our work." (It did.) "(House Speaker) Richardson and Perdue are one-termers." (Right again.) "Flaggers will support Georgia Republican Gubernatorial Candidate Ray McBerry." (Note: In the primary, Gov. Perdue got 88 percent of the vote; McBerry got 12 percent. My abacus tells me that means about one in ten people voted for McBerry. Sheila the Family Wonderdog could have done better than that without missing her daily 22-hour naps.)

The truth is that flaggers don't have the political horsepower to get a referendum to vote on the state flag and have no way to punish those politicians who ignore them, except to yell and threaten anybody who disagrees with them. If they are so gung-ho on the flag, what is wrong with the current state flag, which is very similar to the first national flag of the Confederacy — the Stars and Bars? If you are a true son (or daughter) of the South, you should be very proud of this flag.

As a Southerner I don't mind the rants from flaggers. I rather enjoy them, but please spare me Damn Yankees who have the temerity to lecture me on the merits of the Confederate battle flag. To you I say: Mind your own business. This isn't your fight. This is a family squabble. Go do something productive like worrying about all your outmoded rusting factories or shoveling snow in July.

There is no flagger who loves the South more than I do. There has been a Yarbrough on Southern soil since Richard hit the shores of Virginia in the early 1700s, and we have remained here. There is a Yarbrough Society that traces our ancestry and they will tell you that not many of us have ever moved north. We include in the Yarbrough clan farmers, lawyers, a former U.S. senator, builders, business people, soldiers, homemakers and even a modest and much beloved columnist. We are Southerners and damn proud of it.

Flaggers believe that if you aren't with them on the flag issue, you are disloyal. That's a bunch of mule dung. Flaggers don't speak for me or for a lot of other Southerners. My South isn't about dressing up in uniforms and yelling at politicians. My South isn't about the Confederate battle flag and a war that will be forever lost. My South is sweet tea and barbecue. Grits and Friday night football. Talking slow and thinking fast. Saying "y'all" and "fixin' to." My South is hunting and fishing and good neighbors — black and white — and going to church on Sunday. My South is courteous and kind and proud.

I wish the flaggers would get off the state flag and celebrate with me all that is truly glorious about the South. But I doubt they will. They enjoy rattling their sabers too much, and frankly, I enjoy tweaking them. Ours is a match made in heaven, and heaven is just another name for the South.