

April 16, 2007

RUMOR OF UGA VI'S RETIREMENT 'GREATLY EXAGGERATED'

Dear Uga:

I am just back from a trip with my grandson to the Normandy battlefields in France. To tell you the truth, I was reluctant to go because (a) the Legislature was still in session at the time and there was no telling what kind of mischief they would get into if I wasn't around to tattle on them, and (b) I like the French just slightly less than a root canal and couldn't imagine having to deal with that bunch of lazy ingrates for a week.

What I wasn't counting on was the stress of seeing a story in the news media when I returned that you might be retiring after the 2007 season. Fortunately, the rumor of your retirement seems to have been much like the obituary Mark Twain read about himself — greatly exaggerated. You were no doubt the victim of a slow news day. The media must have temporarily run dry of breathless things to say about the late and lamented Miss Trailer Trash, Anna Nicole Smith.

Fortunately, there was a note awaiting me when I arrived home from our mutual friend Swann Seiler in Savannah, saying that you, too, were shocked to hear such spurious rumors and were busy dispelling them. Good for you. Particularly grievous were the insinuations that you might be getting too old for the job. As near as I can calculate, you are in your mid- to late 60s in human years, but you don't look it and you sure don't act like it. Age, like beauty, is in the mind. Need I remind you that Zell Miller was named to the U.S. Senate at the age of 70? Astronaut John Glenn made his second trip to outer space when he was 77. Grandma Moses became a famous painter at 78. George Burns won an Oscar at 80, and as you and I have discussed many times over a late-night drink, Sophocles wrote Philoctetes when he was 87. And not one of them had an air-conditioned dog house, like yours.

I suspect the rumor of your retirement was the work of some spiteful Georgia Tech supporters. Who can blame them for wanting you to retire? They must be jealous with rage that we have you to inspire us on beautiful fall afternoons at our holy shrine, aka Sanford Stadium, on the campus of the University of Georgia, the oldest state-chartered university in the nation, located in Athens, the Classic City of the South. What do they have? They have Buzz, that weird-looking lumpy thing with skinny legs running around Grant Field, which is located in Atlanta where sewers blow every time somebody flushes the toilet, trying to rev up a half-empty stadium of old men in tweed coats. How embarrassing is that?

Never forget how proud those of us who love the Red and Black are to have you represent us with such style and class. Think of those poor folks at Tennessee who have to make do with a common bluetick coonhound or the Auburn faithful who call themselves "Tigers," but who run around yelling "War Eagle" at a bird. I will never figure that one out. I'm not sure they understand it themselves.

Then there is that dopey thing masquerading as a Gator at an unnamed institution that he/she/it represents and which has two basketball national championships and a football national championship as well. They were insufferable long before all those championships, and I fully expect tweaking them and their dumb-looking mascot is going to get me a ton of "yanhee-yanhee-yaya" mail. God can be cruel sometimes.

Anyway, I am glad you have decided to stay on the job. We need you and your leadership. Yes, I know the pay isn't much and the travel gets to be a hassle, but that is the price of fame. Besides, you've got to admit that you have a pretty good gig, including having good-looking cheerleaders go ga-ga over you all the time. No wonder you drool.

Have a good summer, my friend, and take it easy. Remember, we old guys have to stick together. Woof! Woof!

Your pal,
Dick