

November 3, 2008

## **KUDZU-EATING GOATS OFFER GREAT POTENTIAL FOR GEORGIA**

First, an explanation as to why I am not talking about the elections this week. It is called a deadline. This column runs in a number of major markets around the state, from Rocky Face to Rincon to Sugar Hill. To ensure that all my loyal readers are treated equally, there have to be deadlines. The last thing I need is for some Rinconian to lord it over a Sugar Hillsman or a Rocky Facade because he got my column first and knows something his buddies don't know. ("Hey Luther, I just read that 90 percent of all Yankees talk too loud and most of them think 'potlikker' is another name for moonshine. You'll just have to wait and read about it next week. Hee! Hee!") Wars have started over less.

The unalterable deadline therefore required me to submit this column to the editors prior to the elections. In retrospect, I am no doubt providing a public service because you certainly have grown weary of condescending pundits blathering on about why you did what you did on Election Day, as though you didn't know already.

Plus, other important goings-on are taking place in our state besides the elections. One story that may have slipped past you during all the noisy mud-slinging could have ramifications far beyond any presidential election, U.S. Senate race or even who is going to serve as your county probate judge — whatever that is.

Listen to this: The Atlanta newspapers reported recently that the city of Decatur is thinking of bringing in a bunch of goats to chomp the kudzu off its local cemetery. Hugh Saxon, the deputy city manager and noted goat authority, was quoted as saying, "They [goats] may end up playing a role, once we use more conventional methods." I suspect Mr. Saxon knows this already, but the only conventional method known to man that will eradicate kudzu is a nuclear bomb, and even that is not a given.

Until I saw this story, I've never thought much about goats one way or the other. Who does? But if they are successful in eating all the kudzu in the Decatur cemetery, you are going to see a lot of goats in the state's future. I believe there is enough kudzu on I-75 alone to keep goats going for the next fifty years.

Granted, I am given to hyperbole, but I predict that kudzu-eating goats could even be an even bigger tourist attraction than Gov. Perdue's Go Fish, Georgia program, and it wouldn't require \$23 million to get the goats involved. Goats work cheaper than fish. Besides, fish wouldn't touch kudzu if you slathered it with Vidalia onion salad dressing.

Go Fish, Georgia has inherent risks associated with it. If our lakes dry up, the fish will get mad and refuse to cooperate, even if it is the governor's pet project. Kudzu, on the other hand, is readily available in our state. There is not a five-square-foot plot in Georgia that doesn't have kudzu growing on it, except downtown Atlanta. Not even kudzu wants to be in downtown Atlanta, especially after 5 p.m. Neither do goats.

This is what excites me: If we promote it right, I think we could get tour buses full of loud-talking Yankees down here to watch our goats eat kudzu from one end of the state to the other, and then we could sell them jars of potlikker at outrageous prices and tell them it is moonshine. The program would be called Watch Goats Eat Kudzu, Georgia. Just the potlikker sales alone could eliminate our state's \$1.6 billion budget deficit, and everybody would be happy — unless the loud-talking Yankees decided to stay, which is always a dreaded possibility. I haven't figured that part out yet.

I must confess I am already looking ahead to 2010 when we choose our next governor. I'm not ready to endorse any particular candidate at this time, but if someone will assure me that my Watch Goats Eat Kudzu, Georgia initiative will be a priority in his or her legislative program, they'll have my vote.