

December 28, 2009

### IT IS A NEW YEAR BUT DON'T TELL THE CORN-FRIED SHRIMP

You can stick a fork in 2009. It is done. I can't say I am sad to see it go except that it puts me one year closer to the ultimate conversation with my Maker, who can't wait to hear my excuses for a life not lived as well as He and I would have liked.

Only three things of note happened this past year. First, we swore in a new president, Barack Obama. Second, we lost Michael Jackson, which cut the weirdo quotient in the country by 50 percent. Third, and most important, the University of Georgia, the oldest state-chartered university in the nation, located in Athens, the Classic City of the South, won the state football championship. That's big. Real big.

I welcome in 2010 as I have all the other years with a corn-fried shrimp feeding frenzy at the exquisite little Georgia Sea Grill on St. Simons Island. Nobody has ever mistaken shrimp for brain surgeons, but you would think by now they would have figured out that toward the end of December they would be wise to pack up and head for some place like Akron until I have come and gone. My arrival cannot be a surprise to them.

In 2010, we will elect a new governor in Georgia. Following Sonny Perdue as governor won't be easy. How can anyone hope to top "Go Fish, Georgia"? To that end, I am encouraging all the gubernatorial candidates to look seriously at my innovative program called "Go Eat Kudzu, Goats" in which we will get a bunch of goats to eat the kudzu off the trees on our Interstates. That will bring in busloads of loud-talking Yankees who will pay big bucks to watch the goats eat. This, in turn, will put a dent in our deficit. We can also sell the tourists jars of potlikker and tell them it is moonshine which they can take back home and show their friends who, also being loud-talking Yankees, won't know the difference.

The good thing about my idea is that it can work for both Democrats and Republicans. It is as ecumenical as it is innovative. Goats don't much care who our governor is. They just like to eat kudzu. Loud-talking Yankees don't care, either. They'd rather watch goats eat kudzu than have to stand knee-deep in snow in July back home. (Note to all gubernatorial candidates: My "Go Eat Kudzu, Goats" program comes complete with instructional video. Don't delay. Call today. 1-800-GOATS.)

People are always stopping me on the street or when I am having my toenails manicured and asking me who will be the next governor. That is because I am known to possess one of the keenest political minds in Georgia politics. I achieved legendary status in February 2001 when I stated in a column that some political pundits were saying incumbent Gov. Roy Barnes was going to have a tough reelection campaign. "Forget it," I opined, "Roy Barnes will easily win reelection." That is how reputations are made. Of course, my faithful readers understood I was just joshing with them. I am a big kidder. I knew it was going to be Perdue all along. I really did.

2010 promises to be a landmark year for the Legislature, also. After the embarrassing revelations of former House Speaker Glenn Richardson, legislators have vowed to enact strong ethics laws. One proposal will require lobbyists to have a scarlet letter painted on their foreheads which they will be allowed to remove only when they are providing legislators with (a) dinner; (b) drinks; (c) dinner and drinks; (d) tickets to events that you and I can't afford; (e) transportation to events that you and I can't afford and/or (f) all of the above. One legislator said, "I am going to let lobbyists know that my integrity is not for sale. A good time to discuss this will be on the corporate jet en route to the Masters."

Now if you will pardon me, I just saw a corn-fried shrimp trying to tiptoe past me. He thinks he is going to Akron. I think not. Happy New Year.