

## Where do Georgia Republicans go from here?

Georgia may be a purple state now in national politics, or even a blue one given the trifecta Democrats Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock completed in this past week's U.S. Senate runoffs. But it remains solidly red under the Gold Dome in Atlanta.

As members of the General Assembly return to the state Capitol this week to begin their annual legislative session, it bears watching how the still-in-charge Republicans react to their sudden political mortality – and how they signal their intentions to stave it off.

The events since the runoffs will certainly give them pause. After nine weeks of Donald Trump's accusations that Democrats – and, in his telling, some high-ranking Georgia Republicans – had stolen the election from him, we saw where that kind of rhetoric leads. An angry mob of Trump supporters broke into the U.S. Capitol, ostensibly to stop the congressional certification of Joe Biden's electoral win.

They only temporarily succeeded. But the images of rioters violently confronting police, shattering windows and forcing open doors, breaking into leaders' offices and the Senate chamber, peering through an opening in the door at police in the House chamber with their handguns drawn – the effect of those images won't be temporary.

We are still writing the first draft of history here, but it seems quite likely that this marks a political turning point. Trump has mocked his political obituaries many times before, but this incident goes beyond disparaging John McCain or being caught on video speaking obscenely about women. It gets to the core of our nation's governance.

It also catches him on the way down, not the way up.

Whether Trump could sustain his movement looked like a fascinating question for the next two to four years. It's a difficult thing for any former President to do, much less one who lost re-election and saw the opposition party take control of Congress. The Capitol incursion made the task that much harder.

So, where do Georgia Republicans go from here?

There's a real, and obviously raw, split within the party. Sides were taken over Trump's election challenges, and it wasn't always just politics. It got very personal for some involved. Those wounds won't heal quickly or easily.

The healing process may run well beyond the elections of 2022, when Republicans will try to maintain not only their majorities in the General Assembly, but their decade-long grip on every statewide constitutional office. If it does last that long, the damage may be too much for the Georgia GOP to overcome.

But if the party can muster a meaningful degree of unity before taking on a well-oiled Democratic machine, it has an opportunity to bolster its case heading into those contests.

Many Georgians are struggling mightily right now. Thousands remain out of work, and the national labor market hit a distinct bump in the road last month, shedding jobs for the first time since April and extending a six-month downward trend. Employment gains have been stronger in Georgia than nationally, but that progress is fragile.

Many parents are at their wits' end, trying to juggle their day job with their second job as a virtual school teaching assistant for their children.

Others feel the mental and emotional strain of living so tentatively for the better part of 10 months, and wondering how much longer this limbo may last.

What's more, their physical health remains in jeopardy as COVID-19 surges anew: This past Friday Georgia reported more than 10,000 cases in a day for the first time. The seven-day moving average was over 70% higher than at this Summer's peak, and it was more than seven times higher than this Spring's peak.

Removing barriers to employment and education. Improving access to mental and physical healthcare. That sounds like the meat of an agenda that would soar above our partisan rock bottom. That sounds like the work a majority party keen on maintaining its position would undertake.

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### Public Policy

Kyle Wingfield

## Requiem for the woman who shares my name

She wasn't thrilled when I told her I had been invited to write an occasional column for a local publication. After more than three decades in the Bell System and three arduous years as part of the staging of the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games, she thought it time to enjoy a long-awaited retirement. But if I did choose to embark on this new venture, there was one non-negotiable condition. I was never to use her name in print. She wanted anonymity.

The occasional column in one paper soon became weekly. The one paper turned into some four dozen newspapers across Georgia and at last count some 1,500-plus columns. True to my word, I never revealed her name. Instead, she became The Woman Who Shares My Name. Her efforts to feed me broccoli and my creative ways of avoiding it became the stuff of legends. So much for anonymity.

Today, I break that long-ago pledge. Jane Yarbrough was her name and as I write these words she is with the angels, having succumbed to a relatively brief illness and a merciful passing the week before Christmas.

Ours was a romance that began in high school. It started innocently enough. We were good friends who shared a few classes together. I needed a date for our school's Valentine Ball and she agreed to go with me. That was it. Or so I thought. Who would have guessed this would be the start of a partnership that would span six decades.

To say it was all hearts and flowers would be incorrect. I can't imagine two more different personalities being joined together in holy matrimony. I was aggressive. She was passive. I was ambitious. She was practical. I was a risk-taker. She avoided risks. I was all about career. She was all about home and hearth. Then God did one of His miracles. She managed to eventually tame my wild side. I brought her out of her shell and watched her blossom into a graceful, confident woman.

I've told the story often but it bears repeating. In high school, she was a member of the National Honor Society and definite college material but because of the times in which we lived, most young women didn't go to college then. They were expected to become secretaries and/or housewives. She did both and did them well but there was something missing in her life.

Years later, with two children in college, the family decided it was time for Mom to scratch the itch she had always had for all things medical. We sent her off to Kennesaw State University to obtain her nursing degree.

It was a struggle for her hitting the books some 25 years after high school. That meant my taking over the household chores which was an education in itself. (Do you know how many settings there are on a washing machine? And that if you put red clothes in the wash with white clothes you end up with pink clothes?)

But she persevered. The stay-at-home

mom became Jane Yarbrough, registered nurse, with a proud and rewarding career as an occupational nurse at Delta Air Lines until hanging it up to join me on my Olympic travels. While at Kennesaw State, she also introduced her young lab partner to our son. That resulted in a marriage that now numbers some 35 years, two grandsons and four great-grandchildren.

Somehow, I had always assumed she would outlive me and my pedal-to-the-metal lifestyle. God had other plans.

Her sharp-as-a-tack mind began to fade. Always a detail person, she became noticeably forgetful. That, coupled with chronic health issues, began a downward spiral that culminated in hospital stays, skilled nursing facilities and hospice. And then peace.

I have heard from so many people who talk about the impact she had on their lives. They talk about her kindness and generosity. They talk about her genuineness. She had the opportunity to meet U.S. Presidents and First Ladies, politicians of all stripes, CEOs and celebrities. She dealt with them as she did with the person checking her out at the grocery store. Kindly and with no pretensions. What you saw with her is what you got.

These have been difficult days but I am comforted in the fact that Jane Yarbrough has left this a much better world than she found it. She was the Woman Who Shared My Name. She was and always will be the wind beneath my wings. I thank God we shared this journey.

oOo

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Dick Yarbrough

## Cats know when suckers live inside

I grew up in a household that collected cats.

Every so often, my mother would come home with a stray, or as word got out in the Feline Nation, they would wander up to our house and camp outside, knowing suckers lived inside.

Thus, I'm used to cats, know cats, and have developed a healthy respect for them as a species. They simply live their lives the way I would if given the opportunity: Do nothing, lay around, seek interaction only when I want to, and eat and drink to my stomach's content. And occasionally bathe using my tongue.

Currently, we have two "outside" cats -- Jackie and Sadie -- who decided to join our family about two years ago. I rarely notice them, and they only notice me when they're hungry -- a comfortable arrangement for all parties.

But our first "family" cat caused a little more of a stir. My wife found a kitten in the middle of a highway, bloodied and scrambling for life. She pulled over, with our (then) young daughter in tow, and darted between traffic to save the kitten. By the time



### Len's Lines

Len Robbins

I got home that evening, my daughter had already narrowed the choices for her first pet's name: Yo-Yo or Uncle Gary.

Slighting her Uncle Gary, she chose Yo-Yo. After an animal is named, you are legally obligated to keep it -- or so I was told.

We soon found out that Yo-Yo, like most cats I've known, was psychotic. Yo-Yo found great joy back then from jumping on unsuspecting people while hiding in the oddest of places -- like my pants pocket.

Shortly after Yo-Yo came to our home, I received a frantic phone call from home.

"Len, you have to come home now! It's the cat," my wife told me while I was at work.

"What's wrong with the cat?" I asked with visions of something horrible, like him being run over or eating the pork loin I was planning to eat at lunch.

"Just come -- now! Hurry!"

Then I heard some commotion in the background, my daughter screaming something, and my wife hanging up the phone.

"Wow, this must be serious," I thought to myself. "I better get home quick."

I did, after I scanned the Internet for a while, then went by the local convenience store to peruse their new inventory of hats.

Once home, I was led to the office area, where some work had been done on the floor. My wife then pointed to an open air-conditioning vent. The vent, about four inches wide, went down into the floor and didn't have a cover because of the work that was in progress.

"He's in there," my wife

gushed, wrought with worry. "Yo-Yo's in the vent and he won't come out. You need to go get him out."

I looked down in the vent. My wife, or daughter, or both, have scattered some kitty litter and cat food in the vent in an attempt to lure Yo-Yo from his hiding place.

Knowing cats and their wily ways, I wasn't too concerned.

"Don't worry about it," I said assuredly. "He'll come out after a while."

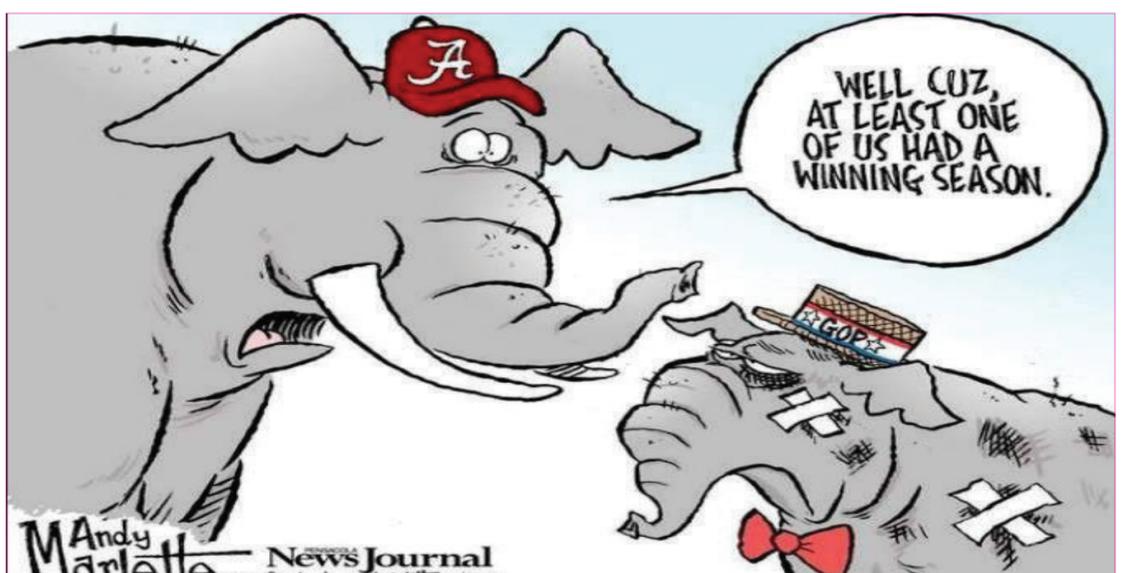
My carefree attitude toward this "emergency" didn't seem to comfort the ladies of the house, who said they feared Yo-Yo "would die in there."

They then proceeded to walk around the house, yelling into the other vents, hoping Yo-Yo would hear them as he explored the inner workings of our HVAC system.

While they were wandering around the house fretting and hollering, I looked back at the vent. There was Yo-Yo, calmly licking his coat, not a care in the world.

I then went back to work. Yes, indeed, suckers live inside.

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## Letters to the Editor are always welcome

The Donalsonville News reminds letter to the editor writers that shorter is better. Concise letters are not only better read, they are more likely to be published because limited space is available. Almost any point can be made in 350 words or fewer, so this is set as an upper level for length.

Unsigned letters, letters signed with a fictitious signature, copies of letters sent to public officials, or letters containing unverified or anonymous quotes will not be accepted.

We limit letters on a subject when we feel it has been thoroughly aired to the point of letters becoming repetitive. Also rejected are letters that are libelous, in bad taste, or are personal attacks on individuals or private businesses.

Writers must include addresses and telephone numbers. These are for identification purposes only, and will not be published.

Send letters to the editor to P.O. Box 338, Donalsonville, Georgia 39845

