

Presenting the one and only 'Idea Guy'

You've probably heard of Larry the Cable Guy. But what about Glenn the Idea Guy? Glenn is nearly as funny as Larry. He also whips out more big ideas than Larry does one-liners. You're likely to hear more of Glenn in the future. He may be trying to run for governor.

We're speaking of House Speaker Glenn Richardson, known in some quarters as Romeo. He picked up that moniker after Democrats alleged the speaker engaged in "improper conduct" with a corporate lobbyist who turned out to be a leggy blonde from the gas company. She needed Glenn and his boys in the House to approve a costly pipeline bill for her bosses.

Our spies report that Glenn recently took a cold shower and decided to spend less time on his libido and more on his vision for Georgia. Sounds like things might suddenly turn calm

for a week or two in the Richardson-run House that should have "Anything Goes" inscribed over the door. Even so, the Speaker has come up with more fresh ideas than monkeys have bananas, which might be an appropriate metaphor for his current impulses.

He tossed out a blockbuster a few weeks ago — a total overhaul of Georgia's tax system that would abolish property taxes, raise sales taxes and reduce local officials to high-priced ribbon cutters. Glenn and his minions would take care of collecting taxes and dispersing the revenue statewide.

Hardly anyone disagrees that Georgia needs a cleaned-up tax code. However, centralizing government in Atlanta and reducing mayors and county commissioners to door-openers for House members is a bit like — how shall we put this? — what the Russians were planning

Shipp's Georgia



Bill Shipp

just before the Soviet Union fell to pieces.

That's OK, though. Glenn the Idea Guy was trying to make us laugh. He just needs more work on his material. Maybe he ought to change the title of his latest sketch from Glenn's GREAT Tax Plan — I'm not kidding — to something else.

As soon as Glenn and his press secretary, Celia Davis, returned from a state tour to promote the GREAT plan to civic leaders and the press, the Speaker pulled the lanyard on another salvo.

He unveiled a \$20 million proposal to establish an alternative career education program to serve students who might otherwise drop

out of high school. Georgia has the second-worst dropout rate in the nation.

The program, to be known as Glenn's BRIDGE, was so colossal that most local educators were left speechless when they heard about it. For a moment, school boards forgot Glenn the Idea Guy was about to take away their taxing powers.

(As you probably have guessed, BRIDGE and GREAT are acronyms for names that would take the rest of this column to spell out.)

Gov. Sonny Perdue, of course, must be in shock. Richardson took a mean poke at Perdue earlier this year when the governor vetoed a pet bill of the Speaker that would have returned millions in surplus funds to taxpayers. The Idea Guy asserted, respectfully, of course, that the chief executive had showed "his backside." The Sonny-Glenn battle is expected to resume

in January with a stunned governor trying to keep from being swamped by the Idea Guy.

More recently, Glenn's right-hand man and closest pal, House Rules Chairman Earl Ehrhart of Powder Springs, labeled Perdue's proposal to subsidize health care for small businesses as "an entitlement," a fighting word in the GOP.

In any event, the most entertaining act in the state Capitol in 2008 is likely to be the Idea Guy.

In some ways, Richardson is a smaller-than-life version of former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich. Both employ an iron-fisted leadership style, inspiring whispering and dissent among rank-and-file Republicans. Both like to roll out big ideas that dominate the landscapes of the day. Both have been tarred by ethics problems that led directly into their personal lives. And despite their spectacu-

lar brainstorms, both will probably come up short in attaining executive success (the governorship or presidency, respectively) because their sometimes mean and wild-eyed personal styles scare the public to death.

P.S.: Nothing came of the Democratic-inspired misconduct charge against the Idea Guy. He controlled the ethics panel that threw the accusations into the wastebasket. In addition, according to a reliable source who asked to remain anonymous, Republican leaders did not want to give credit to then-Democratic State Chairman Bobby Kahn for bringing down a Republican speaker, no matter what the speaker did. We see the same kind of party blindness in President Bush, who refuses to fire Alberto Gonzales, the dumbest and most incompetent attorney general in the history of the world, only because the Democrats want him gone.

Coming to terms with the real issue in 2008

This spring, I reminded readers about a 2006 column of mine. That original column warned that America was headed off a cliff with its commitment to a bloated housing market, and that the mortgage industry would come tumbling after.

In March, I amplified on these themes with the suggestion that the real-estate slowdown had started. I offered that the impact on the financial world might stretch far beyond U.S. borders.

Piddling underneath the dark clouds of this gathering storm has been Congress, with its endless train of investigations into everything from the U.S. attorney general to "the sport of wrestling."

President Bush, meanwhile, is so obsessed with

Iraq that he might as well move there.

Those outside the insulated bubble of Washington, D.C. — remember us? — nevertheless recognize the real issue for the 2008 elections.

It goes something like this: Am I about to lose everything I gained from those days when Alan Greenspan reversed the Fed's policy of instituting multiple hikes in interest rates?

You remember: The interest-rate increases Greenspan implemented to "cool off" the economy, the increases that triggered a recession.

We recovered from that Greenspan blunder only after the Great One reversed engines and started cutting interest rates as fast as he had raised them.

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Other Voices



Matt Towery

The trouble is that this monetary finagling created a gold-rush mindset among Americans. The nation was informed that the only lasting wealth was land ownership. Land, that is, that many purchased with the bank's money, upon which borrowers then borrowed again to use as a giant credit card to pay for the good life.

Now we're seeing that the underpinnings of the American economy aren't as stout as thought. Greenspan's wild ride has left his Fed successors and government leaders with a big fat

mess.

Mark it: In the coming months there's a strong likelihood that a full-blown economic panic will grip this country.

How can the economy be strong when we have lost manufacturing to other emerging nations, when we're taxing our citizens to pay for the well-being of Americans and everybody else in the world, when we have citizens with negligible personal savings, and when we have an aging population that thinks early, lavish retirement should be an entitlement?

Trust me. We're in a five-alarm financial mess. Anybody who thinks the situation is limited to the so-called "sub-prime lending" world is crazy. There are plenty of standard loans out there with borrowers wor-

ried sick about making payments — on their properties, yes, but often on home-equity loans.

And neither political party has the slightest concept of what to do. The Republicans have committed to endless war with endless costs, all the while giving huge tax breaks to oil

companies.

From the Democrats come repeated calls to repeal tax cuts "for the wealthy," which would only punish those who make just enough money to buy goods or provide jobs to others.

Unless we create a special "you're-too-darn-rich" tax See TOWERY on page 18

Season tickets on sale for \$5

10 YEARS AGO

Aug. 28, 1997

MIKE "Tadpole the Clown" Barnard shared the secret of rope tricks with smiling clown student, Rey Kineard, in a special workshop Saturday sponsored by the Arts Council and the Recreation Department.

MISS PATTI Lee Clenney, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Phil Clenney of Blakely, and Mr. Patrick Steven Wright, son of Mr. and Mrs. Steve Wright of Atlanta, have completed plans for their marriage which will take place at 2 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 30 at New Hope Baptist Church in Blakely.

THE 1997-98 VICA officers were installed in a ceremony at the high school Aug. 19. Kaycee Commander was inducted as president of Health Occupations VICA and Casie Hodges was named the DCT president.

ARMY SGT. 1st Class Sharon T. Jackson has been named noncommissioned officer of the quarter. She is the daughter of Euzera L. Williams and Horace L. Williams of Damascus. She is a 1982 graduate of Early County High School.

25 YEARS AGO

Aug. 26, 1982

THE EARLY County Bobcats will host Cook County here Friday night at Standifer Field to kick-off the 1982 football season. New head coach Ric Hall hopes this year's team will be representative of true Bobcat football.

THE SOUTHWEST Georgia Academy Warriors open their 1982 football season Friday night when they journey to Dixie to meet Westbrook Academy. The Warriors will have Wayne Talley as head coach this season who will take over from Jimmy Sealy who was

From our Files

News from the past

head coach for 11 years.

MR. AND MRS. G. Britt Faircloth Sr. of Tifton announce the engagement and forthcoming marriage of their daughter Theresa Kay, to Leonard Allen White Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Allen White Sr., all of Blakely.

MR. GREG and Michel Tabb from Lauderdale, Miss., have been visiting their grandmother, Mrs. Ruebin Tabb, this week. They returned home today.

TRAVIS AND Christie Cleveland are visiting their grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Buddie Cleveland, this week.

50 YEARS AGO

Aug. 29, 1957

SEASON TICKETS for five Bobcat home football games are now on sale at Howell Drug Company, it was announced this week. Price of the tickets, which call for reserved seats, is \$5.

HOLDING their regular weekly luncheon meeting the past Friday, members of the Blakely Rotary Club learned something of the Fort Gaines/Chattahoochee River Development project now under construction.

BOYETT'S department store has recently completed its renovation and redecorating program and Bernard Herring, manager, invites the public to come and see the many improvements.

MISS Patricia Davis became the bride of Harrell Mercer in a ceremony performed at 7 o'clock Monday evening, August 19, in the Free Will Baptist pastorate of Blakely.

THE ANNUAL reunion of the Bridges family was held at Smith's Ford on the sec-

ond Sunday in August.

THE LUCILE Home Demonstration Club met on August 23 at the courthouse. The president, Mrs. Bob Jordan, called the meeting to order.

75 YEARS AGO

MISSING FROM OUR FILES

100 YEARS AGO

Aug. 30, 1907

DEPOSITS are listed as \$49,615.17 at the First National Bank of Blakely in its statement published in this issue and signed by R.O. Waters, cashier, attested to by J.C. Chaney, J.R. Pottle and J.J. Smith.

GOV. SMITH last Tuesday named Jack Standifer, of this city, to one of the two medical appointments to the University School of Medicine at Augusta.

TOM UNDERWOOD entertained a number of his young friends at a birthday party last Monday.

MRS. A.L. Jones of Tupelo, Miss., is visiting relatives in Blakely this week.

DR. E.E. Irwin and Mr. Curtis Alexander were over to Dothan Tuesday.

MR. T.J. GRIST spent several days in Hartford, Ala., this week.

MISS MATTIE and Annie Butler entertained last Friday night in honor of Miss Hilda Butler. Quite a crowd of the younger set were present.

125 YEARS AGO

Aug. 24, 1882

THE PROTRACTED meeting at the Methodist Church closed Sunday night. We are informed that there were 15 additions to the membership.

THE FUNERAL of Senator Ben Hill took place in the city of Atlanta on last

Saturday.

MISS JENNIE Jones, principal of the art department of the Dalton Female College, who has been spending the vacation among friends and relatives in Blakely and Bluffton, has returned to resume her position in the school.

Health Mart

Health Advisor Tip

Leigh Bruner, PharmD
Bob Hall, R. Ph.

CHILDREN & MEDICATIONS
Did you know that when it comes to medication, children and adults react differently? That's why the American Academy of Pediatrics advises never to give any over-the-counter medications to children two years old or younger without first talking to the child's doctor. Additionally, children under the age of 12 should never take aspirin without a doctor's approval because aspirin may lead to Reye's syndrome, a potentially fatal illness. So if your child is under the weather, consult their pediatrician before administering any medications. And talk to your Health Mart pharmacist, who will help monitor your child's medication.

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