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Here a veep; there a veep; everywhere a veep, veep

Curtis Seltzer

BLUE GRASS, Va.—Mitt Romney called on Monday seeking the kind of counsel only I give. It went like this:

Mitt: Hey fella. This is Mitt.

Me: I know no Mitts.

Mitt: Mitt Romney. I need your help. You're the best in the business even though nobody knows it.

Me: I don't do political consulting anymore.

Mitt: Free is always cheaper than what you pay for. Curt, I'm in a heck of a big pickle. I need a vice-president—you know, a Goldilocks...not too hot, not too cold, just right.

Me: Goldilocks probably committed burglary in the third degree against the Bear Family, and, at the least, she was guilty of trespass and porridge theft. Let's come up with someone who is not a criminal from the git-go.

Mitt: Well, sure, picking a veep is more like a wine tasting. One guy has earth tones. Another is too acidic. A third lacks complexity.

Me: Here's my advice. Don't tell anyone in the media that you're picking a vice-president the way you pick a bottle of wine.

Mitt: Right. Got ya. Those media people nip at me like vultures. This phone call is worth its weight in gold. I don't sip by the way. But I've heard people talk about wine.

Me: How about this: Don't pick anybody. Let the convention decide. Power to the people, and all that.

Mitt: My goodness, you're brave. That's not for me.

Me: So what qualities are you looking for?

Mitt: Can't be a Mormon, obviously. That rules out Huntsman, which is too bad. Qualities? Nice is important. Nice looking. Nice personality. Nice family. Nice all-around. Able to reach across the aisle.

Me: How about Ann Coulter?

Mitt: The only aisle she's ever reached across is the one in her supermarket to get to the diet water.

Me: But she has pop with the Republican base.

Mitt: She's an improvised explosive device of her own making. The fall campaign would be about her, not the Obama record. I prefer quiet girls.

Me: Coulter wants to abolish female voting, because they vote disproportionately for Democrats. She says Democrats would never win another election if women were disenfranchised.

Mitt: She's right about that. Every poll shows me losing big with that female demographic. If we took their vote away, we'd create thousands of jobs in America.

Me: How?

Mitt: Women put Democrats in office who spend, spend, spend. If women can't vote, Republicans will win and cut, cut, cut. The less government spending, the lower our taxes. This means more money will stay in the hands of people and corporations who invest, which means jobs, jobs, jobs.

Me: My, my, my. If my taxes drop by \$1,000 or two, how will that create jobs?

Mitt: Tax cuts for the likes of you will create no jobs, because you don't make enough running a no-charge, political-consulting outfit to invest in a job-creating business. Money has to be concentrated where money already is—in just a few hands to be invested efficiently. That's why tax cuts for the wealthiest individuals and corporations create jobs. Your job is to spend, spend, spend your tax cut...down to the penny. If you and your kind don't spend, all the jobs that concentrated wealth creates will fade away like ghosts of yore.

Me: I guess that's how it works.

Mitt: Buck up, Curt. You and every little person in America are essential to our economy.

Me: Thanks for the stroke. If you came out for a ban on women voting, people would say you were anti-woman?

Mitt: Another Obama lie. I love women. My mother was a woman, so were our housekeepers. Several work on my campaign staff. I married one for gosh sake. If I choose a female veep, no one can accuse me of being anti-woman. Can't you think of someone other than Coulter?

Me: Laura Bush?

Mitt: Nothing wrong with her, but she brings baggage if you catch my drift.

Me: Condoleezza Rice?

Mitt: She turns off the Republican base. She's a little creepy.

Me: Sarah Palin has experience running for vice-president.

Mitt: You don't win a beauty contest in secondhand heels.

Me: She'd convince Republicans that you're not a moderate.

Mitt: She was a net negative for John McCain in 2008. End of discussion. All right—what about guys?

Me: Run with one of your primary opponents? Gingrich? Santorum? Perry? One of the others?

Mitt: If I didn't think they'd make a good president in the primaries, why would I think they'd make a good vice-president? Scratch 'em all.

Me: How about Trump?

Mitt: His only experience is making money and having his companies file for bankruptcy.

Me: Ripping off bondholders is more ethical than ripping off taxpayers, don't you think?

Mitt: It depends. Maybe I could put him to work building government- owned and operated casinos on federal land. That would increase federal revenue without increasing taxes, or even cutting anything.

Me: But isn't running a house-always-wins gambling operation something the private sector does better than government? Do we want civil servants dancing in floorshows behind feathers?

Mitt: How big are the feathers?

Me: Think canary.

Mitt: I don't like yellow. Trump is out. Vegas money would never trust one of their own.

Me: Governors? Christie? Pawlenty? What about that weird little dude in Louisiana?

Mitt: Three flavors of cheese, if you like cheese. What I need is experience beyond a governor's office. I need someone who is worldly. I need someone who can be President.

Me: How about Hillary Clinton?

Mitt: Talk about a dark horse! Do you think she hates Obama enough to bail out and run with me against him?

Me: Promise her what she wants. A one-term Romney presidency and your endorsement in 2016.

Mitt: But what if I want two terms?

Me: Then you'll have to decide how good your memory is for political promises.

Mitt: But Republicans hate her. Even country-club moderates like me squirm. And don't forget she's had sexual relations with that man, Mr. Clinton. Also, she believes in health care!

Me: You did, too.

Mitt: Quit going negative on me! How could I ever sell Hillary to the GOP base?

Me: Tell them that she's seen the light and deserves a chance to repent.

Mitt: Well...she did start out as a Goldwater girl. It'll be a tough sell.

Me: Republicans have no choice. They can sit out 2012 and let Obama win or vote for you. They won't vote for Obama under any circumstances. So take Hillary, and you'll pick up all the women you want, as long as you keep your plan for disenfranchising them under your hat.

Mitt: I don't like hats.

Me: You win by being who you are—a centrist. You run a fusion campaign. Promise to break Washington gridlock. Rise above partisan squabbling. Get stuff moving. Get stuff done.

Mitt: But then I'll have to go back to being the old me and not the new me that I've tried to become, because the base hates the old me, which I always was. And still am.

Me: You are who you were. You never fooled anybody anyway.

Mitt: Hillary would want to make policy. She'd boss me around. She'd straighten my tie. She'd want to run the country. She might throw a lamp at me.

Me: Coulter throws knives and tomahawks. Here's what to do. Set up a task force on health-care reform and let Hillary run it. Give her four years to produce a report.

Mitt: That might just work.

Me: There's one thing I need to tell you: I've never advised a winning presidential candidate.

Mitt: Don't worry. Your secret is safe with me.

Curtis Seltzer is a land consultant, columnist and author of **How To Be a DIRT-SMART Buyer of Country Property**, available at www.curtis-seltzer.com where his columns are posted. His latest books -- **Snowy Mountain Breakdown, Land Matters** and **Blue Grass Notes** -- are available through his website.

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