

MITT HAPPENS

By Don Feder

Try to imagine an updated version of the old TV show “To Tell The Truth,” where three contestants claimed to be the same person and celebrity panelists tried to guess which was the real whoever.

Here, all of the contestants are W. (for Willard) Mitt Romney.

Kitty Carlisle: “Contestant #1: What is your name?”

“I’m Mitt Romney and I support a woman’s right to choose, gay rights and gun control.”

Carlisle: “Contestant #2: What’s your name?”

“I’m Mitt Romney, and I’ve always been pro-life (except for the times when I wasn’t). I’m a champion of traditional marriage and a proud member of the NRA.”

Carlisle: “And Contestant #3: What is your name?”

“I’m Mitt Romney, and you can trust me – to say anything to get conservatives behind my presidential campaign.”

The Romney who announced his candidacy last week has a favorite throw-away line: “On abortion, I wasn’t always a Ronald Reagan conservative. Neither was Ronald Reagan, by the way. But like him, I learned from experience.”

He also wasn’t a Ronald Reagan conservative on taxes and spending, by the way. In 1994, to distance himself from

Reaganomics, he told audiences that during the 1980s, he'd registered as an independent.

That aside, Ronald Reagan didn't become Ronald Reagan in 1979, in preparation for the 1980 race. The Gipper's conversion was principled. Romney's is expedient. Catholic activist Larry Cirignano says Romney's conversion came not on the road to Damascus but the road to Des Moines.

On abortion, Romney has changed his mind so often he makes Honest John Kerry seem consistent.

Running for the Senate against Ted Kennedy in 1994, Mitt announced: "I believe that abortion should be safe and legal in this country (*Hello, Bill Clinton!*). I have since the time that my mom took that position in 1970 as a US Senate candidate. (*Abortion -- a Romney family tradition since 1970*). I believe that since *Roe v. Wade* has been law for 20 years we should sustain and support it."

That was when he was a candidate in the PRM --- People's Republic of Massachusetts. In Utah, in 2001, Romney sang a different tune with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, telling *The Salt Lake City Tribune*, "I do not wish to be labeled pro-choice."

By 2002, he was back in the Bay State, running for governor, and the label fit just fine: "I respect and will protect a woman's right to choose.... Women should be free to choose based on their own beliefs, not mine and not the government's."

Slick Willard's position on the most important moral question of our times doesn't just change from year to year, but month to month.

In January, campaigning in South Carolina, Romney acknowledged that in the past, "I have been effectively pro-

choice.” In February, he insisted: “I am firmly pro-life ... I was always for life” – except for the times he wasn’t.

Romney attributes his conversion on abortion (the second or third, but who’s counting?) to an alleged discussion he had on stem cell research with a Harvard researcher.

What do you suppose that researcher could have told him that he didn’t know before – that at 10 weeks the unborn child has a heartbeat and brainwaves, and that under *Roe v. Wade*, the difference between abortion and infanticide might be measured by inches and seconds, as the child traverses the birth canal?

Apparently, at age 57, Romney knew none of this – until his mythical encounter with an unnamed Harvard researcher, a conversation about which he’s conveniently vague.

If you’re confused by Romney’s evolving position on abortion (with many missing links), consider Mitt’s shifting stand on marriage.

In January, Romney was Ozzie and Harriet on the campaign trail. “I opposed then and I do now, gay marriage and civil union (*sic.*),” Romney alleges. “I am proud of the fact that my team did everything within our power and within the law to stand up for traditional marriage.”

Well, not quite everything.

As a candidate in 2002, he opposed a defense-of-marriage amendment to the Massachusetts’ Constitution, which preceded the decision of its high court mandating same-sex marriage. (It was, Romney sniffed, “too extreme.”)

As governor, there were any number of things he could have done to stop same-sex marriage after the Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) discovered a right to same lurking in an 18th century constitution.

Article V of the document drafted by John Adams provides, “All causes of marriage, divorce and alimony... shall be heard and determined by the governor and council,” meaning the courts can’t change the definition of marriage. Yet, as the Commonwealth’s chief executive officer, Romney never attempted to enforce that provision against a clear case of judicial usurpation.

Article X of the constitution declares: “The people of this Commonwealth are not controllable by any other laws than those to which their constitutional representative body have given consent.”

The state’s constitutional representative body never consented to gay marriage. The Massachusetts legislature never passed enabling legislation, as mandated by the court. Romney could have simply rejected the decision on the grounds of either constitutional provision. Instead – echoing his earlier pro-choice position – Romney chose to do nothing.

Or, Romney could have used a “bill of address” to try to remove a gang of judicial autocrats who were forcing their radical views on the state. He didn’t. (Mitt currently travels around the country railing against activist judges. Talk is cheap.)

So, what did the champion of traditional marriage do?

The court ordered the legislature to pass a law providing for same-sex marriage within 180 days. The legislature did nothing. When the time limit expired, Romney acted as if the legislature had acted and told town clerks to issue marriage licenses to gays.

He further ordered justices of the peace whose conscience wouldn't allow them to perform such ceremonies to resign.

Except for offering lip-service to traditional marriage, Romney did exactly what gay activists wanted him to do -- nada.

For the last two years, Romney has supported an amendment to overturn the court-imposed deconstruction of marriage. His support consisted of grandstanding at a state house rally and making public statements. When he could have acted, he didn't.

Romney is proud to support traditional marriage – as long as he doesn't actually have to do anything to preserve it.

Then there are gay rights, aside from marriage – where Romney experienced yet another miraculous conversion.

Running against Kennedy in 1994, Romney told the I-Want-To-Sing-Show-Tunes Log Cabin Republicans that he favored the so-called Employment Non-Discrimination Act (which would force employers to hire men who come to work dressed like Carmen Miranda), saying he'd make a better advocate for gay rights than the incumbent.

“We must make equality for gays and lesbians a mainstream concern. My opponent cannot do that. I can and will,” the future family-values champion intoned. During a debate with Kennedy, Romney said the Boy Scouts should accept gay scoutmasters -- which would make for tense times during camping trips. (Romney was then a member of the BSA's executive council.)

As a gubernatorial candidate in 2002, Romney supported domestic partnership benefits for gay couples – another name for civil unions, which presidential candidate Romney says he's always opposed. During Gay Pride Week, the Mittster's campaign

distributed pink flyers announcing, “Mitt and Kerry (*his running mate Kerry Healy*) wish you a great Pride Weekend!”

As governor, Romney refused to disband the Governor’s Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, dutifully signed annual proclamations for “Youth Gay Pride Day” and did nothing to stop his Department of Health from underwriting the publication of “The Little Black Book...Queer in The 21st Century,” a publication with instructions for performing “safe gay sex” in language which would make a gerbil blush.

The homosexual publication Bay Windows noted in a March 3, 2005 article that Romney’s early appointments might be mistaken for a summer-stock production of “The Birdcage.”

“Romney also continued Weld’s (*former Governor William Weld’s*) tradition of appointing openly gay people to key positions in his administration. One of his first cabinet appointments was Daniel Grabauskas, who Romney chose to serve in his cabinet as secretary of the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction. The new governor’s transition team also included several openly gay people, including Grabauskas, former lieutenant governor candidate and current president of the national Log Cabin Republicans Patrick Guerriero and former Mass Log Cabin president Mark Goshko.”

As, president, Mitt would support traditional marriage – and give away the rest of the store.

Gun control is another issue on which Romney has had a change of heart comparable to bypass surgery.

Romney ’94 embraced the Brady Bill, which imposed a 5-day waiting-period for handgun sales and a ban on certain semi-

automatic weapons (called “assault weapons” by gun control advocates).

“That’s not going to make me a hero of the NRA,” Romney declared, while heroically pandering to the soccer-mom vote.

Romney ’02 was darned proud of his state’s draconian gun laws. “We do have tough gun laws in Massachusetts; I support them,” Mitt averred. “I won’t chip away at them; I believe they protect us and provide for our safety.”

You will be shocked – shocked! – to learn that Romney now “believes Americans have the right to own and possess firearms as guaranteed under the US Constitution,” according to a campaign spokesman. Furthermore, he’s a proud (there’s that word again) member of the organization he refused to be a hero to in 1994. He even designated May 7, 2005 as “The Right To Bear Arms Day,” in Massachusetts – a right to which he never alluded in 1994 or 2002.

But, let’s give Mitt the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps he didn’t understand what a gun was until a Harvard ballistics expert explained it to him. (“You see, governor, it has a cylindrical barrel. When the ‘trigger’ is depressed, it fires a metal projectile, called a ‘bullet.’”)

Don’t listen to all of the RINO stuff I said back in 1994 and 2002, when I was appealing to liberal voters in Massachusetts, instead “look at my record as governor,” W. Mitt pleads.

Fair enough. He was governor when the courts ordered Catholic Charities – the state’s largest adoption agency – to give same-sex couples an equal opportunity to adopt, or get out of the business. Romney did nothing.

He could have saved the Church from this bizarre scenario. Even one of his Democratic predecessors, former Governor Mike Dukakis, said Romney could have exempted Catholic Charities by executive order. Dukakis urged, “The state’s anti-discrimination statutes do not preclude an exemption for the Catholic organization.”

Instead, Governor Romney delicately averted his gaze while Catholic Charities stopped providing adoption services after more than 100 years.

That wasn’t the only time Romney could have fought for his alleged principles, but instead pretended that his hands were tied.

In July of 2005, while remaking his image for ’08, Romney vetoed a bill making the abortion-inducing “morning-after-pill” available over-the-counter at state pharmacies and requiring hospitals to provide it to rape victims. The legislature overrode his veto.

Catholic hospitals demurred. That December, Romney’s Department of Public Health determined that Catholic and other private hospitals could opt-out on religious grounds. When the media raised a ruckus, Romney’s counsel found that all hospitals in the state had to dispense the pills -- after due deliberation, to be sure.

“Look at my record as governor,” Ronald Reagan Coolidge Romney pleads, hoping that won’t lead to scrutiny of his judicial nominations.

According to a 2005 story in The Boston Globe, at that point in his administration, Romney had “passed over GOP lawyers for three-quarters of the 36 judicial vacancies he has faced, instead

tapping registered Democrats or independents – including two gay lawyers who have supported expanded same-sex rights.”

Is this the man conservatives want to trust with Supreme Court nominations? If so, I see a flock of David Souters circling the runway at Regan National Airport, waiting to land.

In the 1983 movie “Love Sick,” Dudley Moore plays a psychiatrist who has an affair with a pretty patient (Elizabeth McGovern). Guilt-ridden, he seeks his mentor’s counsel.

“Good God, man, you’re her therapist!” says the older shrink, played by John Huston. “I’m not now,” Moore defensively replies.

“Really?” says Houston. “When did you stop treating her? Before you slept with her? After you slept with her? While you were having sex with her?”

When exactly did W. Mitt Romney become a conservative -- When he started thinking about a presidential campaign? While he was testing the waters? When he was polishing his stump speech?

It won’t be Elizabeth McGovern who gets – well, you know – if conservatives hop into bed with Romney.