TEA PARTYING ROMNEY

"This should be an easy question for you, Jack," my friend asked. "What was the biggest mistake Ronald Reagan ever made during his presidency?"

My friend is just about the savviest conservative Washington insider there is, with 30 years of knowing everyone in town.

"Pen James," I answered.

"Close," he responded. Pen (short for Pendleton) James was Reagan's Director of Presidential Personnel.

"But you said ‘during,' meaning after he became president. His biggest mistake of all was picking Bush to be his running mate."

My friend smiled. "Bingo."

I smiled back. "Personnel is policy."

What we were talking about over lunch yesterday (2/01) is this. George H.W. Bush was a brahmin country-club establishment Republican squish. There was no advantage to Reagan for him being VP. Just imagine how different things would have been had Reagan chosen Jack Kemp.

But instead we got Bush, who dragged in all the non-conservative "pragmatist" elitists like Jimmy Baker, Dick Darmin, and Michael Deaver who ran the Reagan White House.

Baker was from Texas and a long-time friend of Bush's. They were tennis partners at the Houston Country Club. He was Gerald Ford's presidential campaign manager in 1976 (in which Ford defeated Reagan for the nomination, then lost to Carter), and Bush's presidential campaign manager in 1980 (in which Bush lost the nomination to Reagan).

Baker was a country club Bush moderate through and through. He had no connection with or loyalty to Reagan whatever - yet Reagan allowed Bush to persuade him to appoint Baker his White House Chief of Staff.

Baker and James proceeded to permeate the Reagan Administration with Bushie moderate squishes. Reagan conservatives - "Reaganauts" - were few and far between, scattered and isolated here and there throughout all the various agencies and departments. There was only one grouping of Reaganauts within the White House itself - the speechwriters.

Baker-Deaver-Darmin hated the speechwriters, because they insisted on writing speeches for

Reagan that said things Reagan wanted to say - instead of "pragmatic" Pubtard platitudes that wouldn't be controversial. But Reagan had the speechwriters' back so they couldn't be fired.

Quickly, all those scattered lonely Reaganauts learned to call the speechwriters whenever the President was going to speak on a policy or program of their department - and together conspire to make it as Reaganite (meaning small government conservative) as possible. The Baker-James appointees in the department would then scream in protest. Yet when the speechwriters met with the President for the final edit, they prevailed more often than not, for they had Reagan's back as he had theirs.

Personnel makes policy. The Reagan speechwriters are one example of this. We'll likely never see another presidential speechwriting shop as powerful ever again. It is nonetheless instructive as to how conservatives - Tea Partyers in particular - can do to a Romney Administration what George H. W. Bush squishes did to Reagan's.

I've been talking to a lot of folks here in Washington after Romney's Florida romp over Gingrich on Tuesday (1/31). The consensus is that Mittens has sewn it up. As Jack Kelly says, either Romney killed Gingrich or Gingrich committed suicide, but either way Newton's candidacy is a dead man walking. Romney is the last man standing.

This is obnoxious. The Gravy Train Party has triumphed over the Tea Party. Gravy Train Republicans pay lip service to "limited government" as long as nothing actually threatens to derail the flow of government gravy to their lobbyists and their perks of power. Romney is their guy. So what do we do? Are there any ponies in this giant pile of horse manure?

Let's see. First would be that Mittens stands a good chance of beating Zero if he goes after him as ruthlessly as he went after Gingrich. Zero will have close to a billion corrupt crony dollars, an army of ACORN vote fraudsters, and a full court press of an endlessly dishonest enemedia. The only chance we have is with someone willing to ruthlessly attack Zero's plethora of vulnerabilities.

There is an argument that says let's get it over with, let Zero win and drive America over a cliff quickly. I don't hate my country enough to wish this upon it. Besides, it is a pipe dream to think that a Free America, a Constitutional Phoenix will arise from the ashes. Tyranny is far more likely to emerge from catastrophe than freedom.

Historically, people almost always choose security over freedom in the face of disaster. Just look at how the federalies have enormously expanded their power and control over us - DHS & TSA being only two of countless examples - in the wake of 9/11.

I have a number of friends who tell me that if Zero is reelected, they are not only leaving the country but renouncing their American citizenship. I have to tell you I may be among them. If so, I'll have to get in a very long line. If a Zero victory looks likely by the summer, the flood of folks

exiting the country will have begun. If he does win, there will be a stampede.

The odds, though, are that Zero will lose, simply because the economy will be deeper in the tank than now. Zero's Catch-22 is that his goal is to ruin the economy in order to make more voters dependent on government, but this very ruination is what will cause his defeat. He can't get to making more than 50% of voters dependent fast enough.

So let's proceed on the assumption that Mittens wins. The two biggest ponies in his pile are Marco Rubio, who will be his Vice-President, and John Bolton, who will be his Secretary of State.

Bolton would be our #1 SecState choice whomever would be the Pub president. We would have the most pro-American foreign policy of our lifetimes - and that certainly includes Reagan's, for his SecState George Schultz along with the Baker cabal fought the Reagan Doctrine every step of the way.

Bolton would also neutralize any influence of Ron Paul supporters on foreign policy, which, if they think about it, they should embrace. Not having to worry about their pernicious Blame-America-First obsession leaves conservatives free to welcome them into a Romney Administration as allies in the fight for cutting the federalies down to constitutional size. Together, Tea Partyers and Paulistas could do real damage to the federal budget.

Rubio would be our #1 VP choice whomever would be the Pub president as well. It's the reverse of Reagan-Bush. Romney-Rubio would be a squish president and conservative vice-president. Rubio could do to the Romney Administration what Bush did to Reagan's.

Romney has to have Rubio. The guy's a hat trick. He delivers Florida, millions of Hispanic voters, and is an immensely likeable and articulate solid conservative. He's young, matinee idol handsome, and whip smart.

With Rubio, Tea Party Conservatives have the opportunity to make a deal with Romney. It would go something like this:

You (Romney) know we (Tea Partyers) lack any enthusiasm for your candidacy. This could change if 1) once you have secured the nomination with a majority of delegates (probably by early May), you announce Rubio as your running mate rather than waiting for the convention at the end of August; and 2) you guarantee to appoint a Tea Partyer as Director of Presidential Personnel.

Romney would probably balk at a demand for a Tea Partyer Chief of Staff, but there's no harm in including it in the initial negotiations. Then the fallback would be Tea Partyers placed in several key West Wing positions.

Personnel really does create and drive policy. We've got to have a Romney Administration riddled

with Tea Partyers - and Paulistas. We have to insist that the administration not be filled with Gravy Trainers.

My insider friend and I agreed on the bottom line here. Romney needs Rubio and the enthusiasm of Tea Partyers. He will mouth any number of conservative phrases to court conservative support, but what has to be explained to him is we don't trust what he says, we only trust control of presidential personnel. Give us that, and we'll put enthusiastic boots on the ground for you - which you don't have now and only we can provide.

With this deal, Tea Partyers and Paulistas can infiltrate the Romney campaign and work hard for it, knowing that they then stand a good chance to land a job in the administration where they can influence policy towards small government.

There's more. Fired up, Tea Partyers can also go to work on Congress. Specifically, that means getting Pub incumbents and candidates to commit to dumping Boehner as Speaker, replacing him with Eric Kantor in the House; and dumping McConnell as Majority Leader, replacing him with Jim DeMint. Yes, that assumes the Pubs will retain its majority in the House and regain it in the Senate.

This is the last hurrah for our country. We still have a chance to save it. Tea Partying Congress and Romney would provide that chance.