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Ann Romney: Mitt Has Always Been Pro-Life

*Ronald Kessler
Tuesday, May 22, 2007*

When he picked up **Ann** Davies for their first date, **Mitt Romney** left nothing to chance. He arrived in a red Marlin, a new fastback model made by his father's American Motors Co. **Mitt** had cleaned and polished the car until it gleamed. He brought along a bottle of sparkling Catawba grape juice and two chilled glasses.

Mitt took **Ann**, then 15, to see "The Sound of Music."

More than four decades later, the **Romney's** five sons call **Ann Romney** "the great **Mitt** stabilizer."

"She helps ground him, helps provide him perspective," says Taggart **Romney**, the couple's oldest son.

Beth Myers, **Romney's** presidential campaign manager and former chief of staff when he was governor of Massachusetts, **has** watched the two interact since she began working for him in 2003.

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Mitt's Most Trusted Adviser

"Ann is Mitt's life partner and is probably his closest and most trusted adviser," Myers says. "They talk about everything all the time, and her counsel is the counsel that he values most."

Story Continues Below

Whether the issue is running for the presidency or taking over the Winter Olympics, "I weigh in so heavily, and he listens to my advice probably more than anyone else's," Ann agrees. "We never sort of go off on our own, either one of us, without feeling like we're going together on whatever journey that we're on."

In particular, Mitt relies on Ann to evaluate possible staffers.

"I weigh in on personal characteristics," Ann says. "I have no tolerance for people that are phonies. None. I just know when someone doesn't have the right character. And to me that matters a lot; character matters a lot."

Ann Romney isn't shy about expressing her views publicly. Sometimes you can learn more about how Mitt thinks from talking to her.

- On abortion and Mitt's statement in a 1994 debate with Ted Kennedy that since Roe v. Wade is established precedent, it should be sustained:

"Both of us are pro-life," Ann says. "But Massachusetts is a pro-choice state." In fact, she says, "He's always personally been pro-life. Given our faith, we obviously believe in God, we believe in the sanctity of life. He was responding to how he thinks the government should be involved in the issue. And Mitt totally thinks it should be turned over and let the states decide, and get the bickering over with."

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Meanwhile, as governor, Mitt took pro-life stands, vetoing bills that authorized embryo farming, therapeutic cloning, and access to emergency contraception without parental consent.

- On the charge that Mitt is a flip-flopper:

"It's a great campaign tactic by the opposition," Ann says. "They say he flip-

flopped on abortion. Well, you know what? He did change his mind. It took courage. I'm really proud of him, to really study an issue and really come to that. That is the only change he's made, and I believe it's a change in the right direction. He hasn't changed his position on anything except choice, and that **has been** very public, and it **has** never **been** a change in his personal philosophy."

- On prejudice against Mormons, as expressed by Al Sharpton, who said that "those of us who believe in God" will defeat **Romney**:

"I said to **Mitt** there are going to be some people that are going to agree with Rev. Sharpton," **Ann** says. "You'd just as soon better find out who those people are right now, and let them be exposed for who they are."

Ann is warm and very natural. She **has** the look of an outdoors woman bred to be an equestrian, which she is — good carriage, rosy complexion, square jaw, and blond mane.

When she is not flashing her truly unbelievable smile, she may lower her eyes demurely. But **Ann Romney** is not demure — she may be modest, but she isn't meek. She is unpretentious, but she isn't shy. She lowers her eyes, thinking, and then looks up directly at her interviewer and dazzles him with that smile.

Illustrating the way she and **Mitt** interact, on one TV show where they were interviewed together, **Ann** noticed that **Mitt** may have misunderstood a question. He was talking about trying to be like his father. Without looking up, she told him smoothly and *sotto voce*: "They're asking you to name a president" after whom he would want to model himself.

Mitt Meets Ann

Mitt first met the beautiful daughter of the mayor of Bloomfield Hills, Mich., at a party given by classmate Cindy White. It was March 21, 1965, just before **Ann's** 16th birthday. She was a sophomore at the Kingswood, a private school for girls. He was a senior at Cranbrook, its affiliated all-boy school.

The Beatles and the Rolling Stones were playing on 45 rpm records. **Mitt** saw her across the room. He remembered that when he was a Cub Scout in elementary school, he and some other scouts saw **Ann** riding a horse bareback across a railroad track.

"What do Cub Scouts do when they see a little girl on a horse?" **Mitt** says now. "We picked up stones and threw them [at her]."

Years later, at Cindy White's party, **Mitt** thought, "Wow, **has** she changed!"

He remembers that **Ann** came to the party with a date. She states that she had no date and probably came with her brother. In any case, **Mitt** told her that he lived near her — about a mile away — and offered to take her home in his Marlin. She accepted.

"He was pretty cute; that's all I cared about," she says. "But he'd dated a bunch of my friends, and so I kind of knew him a little bit from my friends. He was one of those guys that would date a girl for like six weeks and then go on to another girl, and then another and another. He kind of did that through my sophomore year. He dated about three of my friends. So I was very wary of

him."

When **Mitt** started to show an interest in her, she says, "I was very aloof."
"Whatever it was that I did, it really set the hooks deep, because they're still there. I was being very cautious because he'd broken a bunch of my friends' hearts, and I wasn't going to let him do that to me. Whatever I did, it worked."

Mitt helped plan her 16th birthday party, where they danced for the first time. By then, they were officially dating. At his senior prom, **Mitt** told **Ann** he wanted to marry her. She agreed — sort of.

Mitt went off to Stanford. He got a job as a chauffeur for the physics department at Stanford so he would have enough money to fly home and see her. He didn't tell his parents.

"They wanted him focusing on his studies and not having a job in college, but he did it anyway," **Ann** says. "And he could get away with that because his father was governor then and he was living in Lansing, Mich., which is where the governor's residence was then, and **Mitt** lived in Bloomfield Hills, which is an hour and a half away."

After his freshman year, **Mitt** left for France to begin a two-and-a-half year stint as a Mormon missionary, just as his father, and his father's close friend J. Willard Marriott, had done.

"At that point, he was the only Mormon I'd ever met," says **Ann**, who was an Episcopalian. "I went to church about once or twice a year myself, and when he left, I started looking into the Mormon church, independently of him. **Mitt's** father would pick me up every Sunday to go to church with him."

Ann converted to Mormonism and decided to attend Brigham Young University, which is affiliated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the official name of the church, in Provo, Utah.

Ann wrote letters to **Mitt** at least once a week.

Dr. Dane McBride, a friend of **Mitt** who was a missionary with him in France, remembers that one day **Mitt** came to him at the mission home in Paris looking distraught. In a recent letter, **Ann** had said she was dating another boy.

"What am I going to do?" **Mitt** asked.

McBride, now a clinical immunologist and allergist, read the letter. "Well, maybe it's not that bad," he said.

"You don't understand!" **Mitt** said. "I don't know how I can possibly make it if she chooses this other guy over me."

"When you're that age, a year is literally like forever," **Ann** explains. "I just thought he was gone forever. By the time he'd **been** gone a year, I was dating other boys, and doing other things. I still knew I had feelings for him, but I hadn't seen him for such a long time. I'd write to him and say, 'You know, I'm dating.' I wasn't dishonest about it at all. There were a couple guys that I dated that I kind of liked, and I think that's what really got to him."

Later, **Mitt** told **Ann** her letter so devastated him that he came down with the

Hong Kong flu.

"He literally thought the world had come to an end, I guess," she says. "And I didn't mean it to be that serious. I don't know if I was honestly that serious with this other guy," she says. "Poor guy was stuck and pining away," she says of **Mitt**.

In the summer of 1968, **Romney**, 21, was driving a Citroën in the rain on a mountainous road near Bordeaux with five other missionaries. As they rounded a curve, a Mercedes, possibly passing another car, veered over the median. The Mercedes slammed almost head on into **Romney's** car at what police said was 70 miles per hour. Viola Anderson, the wife of his mission president, suffered crushed lungs and died. **Mitt** was thrown from the car and suffered a broken arm.

The other driver, whom **Mitt** believes was intoxicated, survived. A policeman who came on the scene thought **Mitt** was dead. On his passport, he wrote in pencil, "Il est mort."

Mitt's father George **Romney** called **Ann** at home.

"**Ann**, we've had very bad news that **Mitt's** **been** in a very serious automobile accident, but we don't know much more than that," he said.

George **Romney** picked her up. He turned for help to a Kennedy family friend, Sargent Shriver, then the U.S. ambassador to France, who checked into the situation and reported that young **Mitt** was hospitalized — but alive.

At the end of December 1968, when **Mitt's** missionary work was over, **Ann** was with **Mitt's** parents when they picked him up at the airport in Detroit.

'Why Wait?'

"The second we saw each other, it was one of those remarkable, remarkable moments, that's just crystallized in my mind forever," **Ann** says. "It was as though two and a half years had just dissolved, and we were back exactly where we were when he left. The feelings that we had for each other just came back instantly."

By the time they arrived back in Bloomfield Hills, they had decided they were getting married in two weeks.

"Why wait?" she says. "We'd **been** separated for such a long time. Why wait any longer?"

At **Ann's** house, they told all four parents.

"We made this announcement — and the look of shock on everyone's face!" **Ann** recalls. "My mother had a heart attack, **Mitt's** mother had a heart attack. My father practically fell over."

The parents began telling **Mitt** and **Ann** why they shouldn't get married so young.

"**Mitt's** father sat there just chuckling," **Ann** says. "He was trying his hardest to be the responsible parent, but he just started chuckling with a twinkle in his eye, and he looked at us, and he knew that everything was fine. That even

though we were young, he knew it was the right thing to do."

So arrangements could be made, they agreed to wait until March 21, 1969 to get married. Before the marriage, **Mitt** confided to his friend Dane McBride that they would not consummate the marriage until after the ceremony in a Mormon temple.

"He told me that's what they were going to do," Dr. McBride says. "And I assume they did."

The Romneys' abstinence before marriage fits with a theme sounded by **Ann**.

"**Ann** wants to help young girls make the right choices, which includes waiting until marriage to have children," says Eric Fehrstrom, **Romney's** traveling press secretary.

By the time they married, **Ann** was 19 and he was 22.

Mitt transferred to Brigham Young to be with **Ann**. They lived in a basement apartment with a concrete floor. Instead of buying milk at a nearby store, **Mitt** insisted on driving to a creamery where it was cheaper. Instead of buying an ice cream or popcorn at a movie theater, he would save money by eating ice cream and popping corn at home before the movie.

After graduating, **Mitt** decided to go to Harvard School of Business Administration, but his father thought he should obtain a law degree, so he enrolled in a joint program at Harvard Law School. In 1975, he graduated from Harvard Law cum laude and from Harvard Business School, where he was named a Baker Scholar and was in the top 5 percent of his class.

When they were in college, they had their first son, Tagg. Until recently, he worked for the Dodgers in Los Angeles as chief marketing officer. He now works for his father's campaign as a senior adviser. Then came Josh, now a real estate developer who formed **Romney** Ventures in Utah. Next was Matthew, a vice president at Excel Realty Holdings, a San Diego real estate holdings company. Their fourth son, Ben, is in his third year at Tufts Medical School. Finally, Craig is a music producer at McGarryBowen, an advertising agency in New York. Each of the sons looks as if he stepped out of a Gap ad.

Lucid Business Sense

Along the way, **Mitt** founded Bain Capital, a venture capital firm that now **has** assets of \$40 billion. In evaluating whether to invest in a company, **Romney** would play devil's advocate to flush out facts.

"If someone comes in the door and says, '**Mitt**, black is white,' he'll say, 'Oh, no, black is black or black is red,'" **Ann** says. "He never takes anything at face value; he can argue any side of a question. And sometimes you think he's like really believing his argument, but he's not. He just flushes the whole thing out and figures out the whole picture."

At the same time, **Romney** expects those around him to do their homework.

"If he's in a meeting and someone doesn't have the right data, hasn't prepared well, they know that they're in trouble," **Ann** says. "I think he's a bit intimidating that way, because he's so bright he cuts through a lot very quickly. He thinks in hyper-speed, and he expects people to keep up with him,

and sometimes they don't."

Relying on those techniques and data he developed about the true amount companies spend on office supplies, **Romney** decided to invest \$600,000 in Staples before it opened its first store in Brighton, Mass. After the opening, he invested millions more.

"He made eight times his money in three years," Tom Stemberg, founder of Staples, says.

As outlined in an April 1 NewsMax article, "**Romney to the Rescue**," **Romney** was instrumental in saving the life of the 14-year-old daughter of a fellow Bain Capital partner after she took an overdose of ecstasy and went missing in New York.

Ann and **Mitt** settled in Belmont, Mass., a suburb of Boston that adjoins Cambridge and Lexington. A town of 24,000, Belmont is home to MIT and Harvard professors.

The Romneys live in a colonial home on 2.4 acres of land. The home **has** a heated pool. They bought the home for \$1.25 million in 1989. It's now worth \$3.3 million. During the summer, they stay at their vacation home on Lake Winnepesaukee in Wolfeboro, N.H.

Romney's personal assets are estimated at between \$190 and \$250 million. A trust for his children and grandchildren **has** assets of another \$70 million to \$100 million.

The Specter of Multiple Sclerosis

For all their happiness and success, just before Thanksgiving 1998 **Ann** learned that she had multiple sclerosis. She was weak, and the left side of her body was numb.

"As sick as I was, I would have just as soon had cancer and died," she says. "I was like, 'Would someone please give me a different diagnosis?' because I didn't know how I was going to live with this."

The Romneys have a home in Deer Valley near Park City, Utah, where they go skiing. **Ann** found Fritz Bleitshau, a Utah reflexologist who uses alternative medicine to rebuild strength. He prescribed homeopathic cures, including acupuncture, deep breathing exercises, and yoga. In addition, **Ann** rode her bay gelding Baron every day.

"He is the one that pulled me through when I was really sick," she says. "He's the one that just let me plod around on him when I was so weak. And then as I got stronger, I'd ride him more, and he got stronger, and so the two of us kind of got stronger together. For a horse to show at the Grand Prix level, they have to be very, very fit and very strong, as does the rider. And so last year it was quite a feat for both of us to have done that together."

That was when **Ann** won the Gold Medal at the Grand Prix level from the U.S. Dressage Federation. Today, **Ann Romney** **has** most of her stamina back.

At first, **Ann** was against the idea of **Mitt** running for governor of Massachusetts. **Mitt** had just spent about three years running the Olympics in Salt Lake City.

"I thought, you know **Mitt**, you don't even get a day off and you're going to jump into a fire," she says. "Having run in Massachusetts before for the Senate, he knew what a negative experience it could be. And my assessment was it would have **been** very low odds that he would win the governor's race."

Their son Josh, a Harvard Business School graduate like Tagg and Matt, said, "The door's open for him to go through this. And even though this seems like a high risk, and it might not turn out how you think it should, you will wonder your entire life if he should've gone through that door."

"I looked at Josh and I said, 'Oh, darn it, you're right,'" **Ann** says. "That's the only argument that wins it for me."

Before **Mitt** was elected governor in 2002, **Ann** was helping the United Way of Massachusetts Bay. She became interested in how African-American churches use faith-based programs to get kids who are at risk back on track. With that as a model, she became a co-founder of the United Way's Faith and Action Program, which introduces kids who have **been** abused or are taking drugs or engaging in other high-risk behavior to faith.

"That's **been** a big thing to me, for them to recognize that God loves them," **Ann** says. "No matter who they are, where they are and what they're doing, that God loves them. A lot of other people might have given up on them, but they ought to know that God never gives up on them. That's why I've worked so much with the faith-based groups."

"**Ann** was really pivotal in helping to shape the vision for that project," says Gloria White Hammond, the other co-founder of the program.

Mitt and **Ann** also helped out with contributions from their **Romney** Charitable Foundation, which **has** \$8 million in assets. The Romneys have contributed millions to the Mormon church, Brigham Young University, and causes like the Federalist Society, a conservative legal group.

The Real Deal

Besides starting the United Way program, **Ann** served as a director of Families First Planning Program and the Massachusetts General Hospital Advisory Board. She also served as the governor's liaison to the faith-based initiative started by President Bush. Attacked by critics as a dangerous mixing of church and state, the initiative is in fact a way to make sure that organizations that help the needy are not deprived of federal funds simply because of their affiliation with a religious group.

For more than four years, Jim Towey, a former legal counsel to Mother Teresa, headed the initiative. He remembers touring St. Francis House Shelter for the homeless on Boylston Street in Boston, with **Ann**.

"She hugged one of the ladies there, spoke with an ex-con who was doing intake, and then she went to the place where welfare moms were getting trained to find jobs," Towey tells me. "She mingled effortlessly, and no one knew she was first lady. With some people in political life, they walk into a homeless shelter and can't wait to finish the tour and get out because they don't know what to do or say. With **Ann**, it seemed like she was with family or something."

Towey says **Ann** is someone who "doesn't talk about her faith — she puts it

into action. She's the real deal."

"I think sometimes when you have a person who is as attractive as she is and as appealing as she is, it's hard to believe that they can be as good as she is," says Richard "Bink" Garrison, who currently serves with **Ann** as a director of the United Way.

"Teen pregnancy prevention would be high on my list of things I'd be concerned about as first lady," **Ann** says. "Having fathers involved in children's lives, especially in the inner city would be something I'd be concerned about."

Presidential Aspirations

Ann says a conversation with a friendly senator first got **Mitt** seriously thinking about running for president.

"If Jeb Bush's last name weren't Bush, we'd be supporting him," **Ann** says, meaning Jeb can't run because of voter sentiment against the president. "If someone like that had emerged, I think we might have just said, 'Oh, boy, he'd be great, let's get behind him.'"

Mitt made the final decision last Christmas after discussing it with **Ann**, their five sons, and their five wives. He formed an exploratory committee the same week he left office as governor in January.

"We weighed the pros and the cons, and **Mitt** got out his yellow legal pad, and he wrote down on one column the pros and the other side the cons," **Ann** says. "But to a person, every single child said, 'Yes, it's going to be difficult. Yes, we understand all the problems. But it's worth going through.'"

With the exception of Ben, who is doing his sub-internship at hospitals, each of the sons is heavily involved in the campaign, helping to raise funds.

Sometimes, **Ann** notices that **Mitt has** stolen her lines. In one talk, she referred to the fact that everyone carries "their own bag of rocks," meaning everyone **has** personal problems or **has** family members with personal problems. She cites her own life-changing experience with MS.

"I heard him talk the other day about how people have a bag of rocks," **Ann** says. "I looked at him and went, 'Wait a minute! That's my line!' And he goes, 'Well, it's a good line.'"

Mitt also adopted **Ann's** description of what Washington is like. He talks of Republicans and Democrats in a rowboat that is about to go over a waterfall. Instead of rowing together, they are hitting each other over the head with their oars.

"That's how I see the dangers we're facing in this country right now, and the absolute urgency for us to face some of the issues, like entitlement reform," **Ann** says.

"**Mitt** is running because he sees a trend that will happen to this country if we elect a Hillary Clinton or a Barack Obama," **Ann** says. "He sees that the country will go left like Europe **has** gone. It will become more of a welfare state with socialized medicine and a weaker military. He's running to keep us from becoming the France of the 21st century."

Did **Ann** steal that line from **Mitt**? Or did **Mitt** steal it from **Ann**?

"It's a match made in heaven between **Mitt** and **Ann**," says Fraser Bullock, who was one of the seven partners who started Bain Capital with **Romney** and later served as chief operating officer of the Winter Olympics. "They go along so well together, they're very like-minded. **Ann** is incredibly wise and perceptive in her own right."

A reporter once asked **Ann** in a telephone interview to name her weaknesses. She was searching for an answer as **Mitt** walked into the room.

"Sweetheart, he wants to know what my weakness is . . ." she said to him.

"**Mitt** says my weakness is him," she told the reporter.

Ann might have added to that "The Sound of Music," which is still their favorite movie.

Pamela Kessler contributed to this article.

Ronald Kessler is chief Washington correspondent of NewsMax.com. View his previous reports and get his dispatches sent to you free via e-mail. [Go here now.](#)

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