



## Mark Patinkin

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# Mark Patinkin: Getting into a GOP frame of mind

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I picked up the mail and was flattered to see Michael Steele, national chairman of the Republican Party, had written me a letter.

He wanted me to “represent” Republicans.

I was among a select “few” being asked to fill out a survey to shape the fight to take my congressional district back from the Democrats.

He said I was picked because of my “steadfast commitment” to the party. I’m not sure how I qualified, but I was so inspired, I started chanting, “Drill, baby, drill.” Then I called up British Petroleum and apologized for the U.S. shaking them down for a \$20-billion cleanup fund.

This represented a new phase for me, since I was raised a Democrat. In most American households, that’s as serious as religion. Yet a few decades ago, I realized it’s more about the candidate than party dogma, so I became an independent.

But independents don’t have a party. No leaders pay attention to us. So I was flattered to be tapped from on high as a Republican.

I decided to take the day to get into character.

I began by switching from MSNBC to Fox. Then I preset one of my car radio buttons to Rush.

I put on a blue blazer and tasseled loafers and regretted not having sent my kids to boarding school.

I began looking for real estate in Barrington.

I like journalism, but it’s not good work for a Republican, so I sent an application to do private wealth management.

I looked forward to moving from wage-based compensation to fees, commissions and bonuses.

The morning paper brought more stories of crime, and I wondered why due process has to take precedence over law and order.

I looked forward to having a Vodka and tonic.

At the club.

And people, can we agree that raising taxes to fund social programs will compromise economic growth?

I wondered why we're trying 9/11 terrorists in federal court instead of a military court.

And why my state doesn't have capital punishment.

I decided next time someone asks me for a handout, I'll tell them to get a job. Which is actually compassionate conservatism. It helps no one to promote a culture of dependency.

I vowed to never again use the words "gun" and "control" in the same sentence.

I traded in my VISA card for an Amex.

And I decided to make my next vacation a golfing trip at an exclusive resort in Arizona.

When that time comes, I will book my travel first class, and hope it will be a plane where they close the curtain between that section and coach.

Suddenly, I felt guilt over having owned a German car in the past and having a Toyota in the family today. My next car will be Detroit iron.

I sent out my button-down shirts to have the pockets monogrammed. I felt that would look good with my blue blazer, gray slacks and red ties.

I resigned from my adult baseball league and joined a yacht club.

Then I rerouted my charitable donations from social justice groups to the Preservation Society.

As for dinner, I was planning free-range chicken but decided instead on a T-bone.

I felt it would put me in the mood for my weekend hunting trip.

Though I care about the environment, I decided I'm now against mandatory carbon emissions controls. Let the free market work it out.

I got cranky about activist judges banning the Pledge of Allegiance.

And crankier about the federal government interfering with states' rights.

Crankier still about why we don't beef up the border.

After years of feeling we can all seek God our own way, I had a sudden urge to go to a house of worship.

As for getting God out of education the last decade or so — how's that working out for us?

I went antique shopping.

And wondered why we can't base birth control on abstinence.

I like my mixed breed, but my next dog will be a golden retriever.

I picked up the phone and was miffed that I had to dial 1 for English. And more miffed that foreigners are taking jobs from Americans.

I put on a flag lapel pin.

Then I dropped my subscription to Rolling Stone and ordered Forbes. While I was at it, I switched from The New York Times to The Wall Street Journal.

And wondered why people can't see that marriage is meant to be between a man and a woman.

I put away my Barbra Streisand albums and took out some country and western.

I missed John Wayne and Charlton Heston.

Then I got grouchy about the stimulus bill costing too much for too few jobs.

And grouchier about Washington taking over our health-care system.

Since my new mantra about government is "less."

Except when it comes to the military.

That seemed to cover it.

A part of me misses the old idealism.

But at the end of the day, being hardheaded and pragmatic feels good, too.

Michael Steele, I'm at your service.

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