



**TOP GUN** Perry was elected to the prestigious position of "yell leader" at Texas A&M (left, in 1971); the former air force pilot visits the Texas National Guard in 1999.

than kick them to the curb, so to speak. But this is a state-by-state issue, and I respect those that disagree with me.

**Governor Romney has accused you of flip-flopping on Social Security. You denounced it as a Ponzi scheme but recently you've said, "Everybody who is getting benefits now will be protected."** I've called it what it is. I think, for young and mid-career people, it is a Ponzi scheme.

**So which readers do you think should start figuring out other ways to cover their retirement?**

I think 45-to-50-year-olds realize that if we don't fix the way it's structured, they've got a pretty good idea their chance to have a retirement funded by Social Security will be limited.

**You blasted President Obama's policy toward Israel on the same day he was addressing the U.N., and you took some flak for it. Why did you do it?**

The president has been sending mixed messages for over two years to Israel, our oldest ally in democracy in the Middle East. I have no regrets about bringing

*Perry in a Word*  
"GENUINE."

Growing up, we were taught, "Whatever's coming out of your mouth should be what's going on in your heart." —Jim Mickler, a fellow Boy Scout from Paint Creek

We must be able to keep up with our research and development capabilities in the military. And our very important foreign policy position must be that our friends know we'll be there for them, whether it's Israel in the Middle East or Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, or India in the sphere of influence where China is located.

**Let's switch topics. Governor, you're a very successful fund-raiser. But it's been reported that nearly half of the major donors during your governorship ended up receiving business contracts, political appointments, or tax breaks. The word that's been applied to you is "cronyism." How do you respond?**

That's the same old, tired criticism which comes when people don't want to talk about the real issues, like how do we create jobs.

**But is there any truth to it?**

No. Decisions in Texas are generally legislative, with the lieutenant governor, speaker, and governor making them together. There were no unilateral decisions from my office dealing with those issues. And I'll go back to my record. I've been elected three times as governor. The people obviously have confidence in me.

**Americans will be reading this story in PARADE on a Sunday. What's a typical Sunday for you** ➔ *continued on page 16*

to the attention of the American people that we have a president who, due to his wavering, muddled policy, has brought us to the point where the Palestinians feel comfortable going directly to the U.N. to ask for recognition.

**What are the three most important foreign policy issues facing the U.S. today?** Having a strong economy so that we have the economic ability to have an impactful foreign policy.

## ★ MEET THE SPOUSE ★

# Who Is Anita Perry?



**Hand icon** *Talk about meeting cute: Anita Thigpen first saw Rick Perry at a piano recital in Haskell, Tex., when she was 6 and he was 8. They began dating in high school and wed in 1982. Known as private and shy, the candidate's wife could be his best spokesperson. Perry, 59, is in fact a warm, chatty woman brimming with Texas charm who finishes her interview by inviting the writer out for a beer. A former nurse, she has begun traveling the U.S. to campaign for her husband. In this rare one-on-one, Perry opens up about the man she calls "Ricky."*

★ ★ ★

**LYNN SHERR: Let's start with an easy question. How would you describe your husband?**

## ★ VIEWS ★

# What Perry Must Do Now



**Hand icon** **IF GOVERNOR RICK PERRY** wants to nab the GOP nomination, he might adopt a political version of the Serenity Prayer: "Keep what you should, change what you must, and have the wisdom to know the difference." He should continue to focus on his strengths: Texas's job growth, his early grasp of the Tea Party's importance, and his

status as the party's alpha male.

But he should also make three key changes: One, he must hit the books. In some debates, Perry has seemed adrift. He needs to quickly develop coherent arguments on domestic and foreign policy. Two, Perry must fire up his conservative base while still wooing skittish moderates. The best candidates,

like Ronald Reagan, were able to advance their beliefs without alienating those who disagree. Three, he must prepare for even tougher scrutiny. If there are other skeletons like the hunting lodge in his past, he needs to confront them—and do a better job of explaining them.

—CNN political analyst and PARADE contributing writer David Gergen