



Sarah Palin

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Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, *Grand Rapids, Michigan 49530*

ISBN 978-0-310-31892-7

Joseph Hilley is represented by Thomas J. Winters and Jeffrey C. Dunn of Winters, King & Associates, Inc., Tulsa, Oklahoma.

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Interior design by Beth Shagene

Printed in the United States of America

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FOREWORD

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

BY CHUCK COLSON



RECENTLY, OVER 40 MILLION TV VIEWERS WATCHED Barack Obama become the first African-American nominee of a major political party. And 24 hours later, Republican candidate John McCain set the political world on its ear by selecting a little-known woman governor from Alaska, Sarah Palin, as his running mate.

Either way the election turns out, history will be made. The 2008 Presidential Election will be a groundbreaking, ceiling-shattering event regardless of the new

administration that takes office. History is in the making before our very eyes. And the clash of worldviews is nowhere more evident than in the reaction to Palin's nomination as vice president.

Social conservatives reacted to Palin's selection with near euphoria. Social liberals reacted with fury. Why? How could a governor from a politically small state spark such strong emotions? What is it about Palin that has turned her candidacy into a lightning rod for the political establishment as well as public opinion? Is it the fact that she's breaking glass ceilings as a female political leader or that she's coming to center stage from relative national obscurity?

No. It is because she does not fit the feminist stereotype. She's just a high-achieving mom who comes from the common people. Consider every major controversial issue in American politics and culture right now and somehow, they touch her personally. Start with the most obvious: abortion.

Palin, a mother of five, is staunchly pro-life. And, as you likely know by now, her fifth child, Trig, has Down syndrome. Knowing full well the challenges such a baby would become, Mrs. Palin chose to bring the baby to term. Then, shortly after her selection was announced, Palin and her husband announced that their oldest daughter was pregnant out-of-wedlock — and that the daughter would have the baby.

People on both sides of the life issue reacted swiftly. The pro-abortion crowd mocked Palin for her support of abstinence-only sex education, which, they say, failed her own daughter. Some commentators took the *ad hominem* approach, claiming that it is fine for Mrs. Palin and her daughter to bring their babies to term; after all, they've got money and a supportive family. At the same time, the pro-life side hailed Palin and her daughter as heroes for living out what they believe.

However, I believe that we ought to look at this situation as a test for ourselves. Would *your* belief in the sanctity of life have stood the test if you had found yourself in the Palins' situation? Either as a middle-aged working mom, or as the father of a pregnant teenage girl? How supportive is your church of young, unwed mothers? How do you respond to teen mothers in your neighborhood? How does your willingness to see someone else's point of view affect the social and political choices you make?

Next, consider the war in Iraq. Mrs. Palin's oldest son, Track, enlisted in the Army and has deployed to Iraq. Critics of the war have not said much about this young man's love of country. But his actions, like those of his mother, should cause those who support the war to reflect for a moment: How would you react to your son's enlisting? For putting his money where his mouth is, so to speak? Regardless of where you stand in theory,

the war on terror takes on a new, personal dimension when your own flesh and blood leaves home to risk his life for our country.

With Governor Palin, the issues converge in a way that transcends rhetoric and becomes reality. She has experienced all the dilemmas we all live with in everyday life. Pick any issue . . . homosexual “marriage”: She is against it. But her first act as governor of Alaska was to veto legislation that would have denied state-funded health benefits for gay partners. Or oil drilling: She is for it—even in the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge, and even though she loves the great outdoors as a hunter. Earmarks? She helped scuttle the infamous Bridge to Nowhere. But it also seems that as a small-town mayor, she hired lobbyists to help secure millions in federal dollars to benefit her community.

Like all of us, she wrestles with her own convictions. Every flashpoint in American politics and culture seems to come together in this woman from Alaska. I do not believe Christian leaders should make partisan endorsements, so I am not telling you how to vote, but I am aware that Sarah Palin’s leadership offers a breath of fresh air to the often stagnant political world of competing agendas and partisan loyalties. Why? Because she personally struggles with the same tensions that affect all of us and maintains her commitment to convictions.

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

In *Sarah Palin: A New Kind of Leader*, Joe Hilley makes the case that Palin's leadership exemplifies a new style of political leader, one grounded by her faith while riding the winds of change. If she is elected, all sides can agree: There will be change in Washington.

CHAPTER 1

FROM WASILLA TO WASHINGTON




I was just your average hockey mom,
and signed up for the PTA because I wanted
to make my kids' public education better.

Sarah Palin

History never looks like history
when you are living through it.

John W. Gardner



OUTSIDE THE NUTTER CENTER AT WRIGHT STATE University, the sky was clear and blue, the air hot and humid. Long lines of McCain supporters stretched from the entry doors down the sidewalks and across the parking lot. Two and three abreast they waited, hoping for a chance to get inside the building. Around them, vendors with pushcarts hawked their wares selling McCain t-shirts, bumper stickers, and assorted campaign items.

Inside the Nutter Center, home of the Wright State Raiders basketball team, a loud and boisterous crowd packed every available seat. They had been gathered there since the doors opened three hours earlier. Sitting shoulder to shoulder, they waited for the candidate to arrive. Restless, nervous, and pensive, their voices settled over the arena in a collective murmur.

At noon the lights went down and the arena turned

dark. The crowd gave a spontaneous gasp in response. Then loud speakers, suspended from a scoring gondola above center court, blared music at a deafening volume. In the darkness the crowd waved glow sticks they had been handed at the door when they arrived. The scene looked and sounded like a rock concert.

A few minutes later, the Republican presidential candidate appeared in the corner at one end of the arena. As the music faded, a clear, crisp voice from the speakers announced his presence, and then he made his way onto the court.

Walking with his wife and daughter, John McCain moved down a navy blue carpet laid along the end line of the basketball court. Near the spot where the goal would have hung, they paused, waved to the crowd, then made their way toward center court. There a podium stood atop a newly constructed dais. The candidate and his family stepped slowly toward it, still waving to the crowd as they went. As he reached the podium, McCain paused again and scanned the crowd. His wife and daughter, looking excited and nervous, stepped back, hands folded at the waist. This was his day, his moment. No one wanted it more for him than they did.

After a minute or two to accept the crowd's adulation, McCain stepped to the podium and opened his mouth to speak. Just then a chorus of male voices rose from his right, singing a hearty rendition of "Happy Birthday."

McCain seemed to relish the singers, even though they sounded like drunken sailors, and seemed glad they had remembered the day. As the song faded, he turned again to the podium and set his mouth to speak. Before he could begin, another chorus was heard, more faint than the first but equally well received. It was followed by a third. Finally, the crowd grew quiet. McCain stepped forward and faced them from behind the podium.

Halfway down the remainder of the court, near the foul line on the opposite end, a bank of television cameras focused on the candidate. Wired and ready, cameramen zoomed in for a tighter shot, capturing McCain and the blue-and-white campaign sign that hung from the front with a crowd of people in the stands behind him. On their feet now, they were wedged in tight against each other. Many held small American flags. Facing the back of McCain's head, they stared up at jumbo television screens on the scoring gondola high above.

Visible in the stands was a woman with short, dark hair, wearing jeans and a black scooped-neck top. A nameless face in the crowd. She could have been anyone's mother as her reactions typified millions across the nation. With her eyes trained on the television screen, she took no notice of the camera pointed in her direction as it caught her every move.

John McCain had come to the outskirts of Dayton, Ohio, to end what had been months of speculation about

his selection of a vice presidential running mate. Intent on capturing for himself the title “Candidate of Change,” McCain had selected the site for obvious reasons.

Located in America’s heartland, Wright State was named for two of the nation’s most innovative minds, Orville and Wilbur Wright. Using tenacity and stubborn resolve, the brothers had applied their imagination and ingenuity to the problem of manned flight, a cause most thought hopeless. Working in their bicycle shop just down the road, they fashioned a fragile craft of wood and paper and found a solution to a seemingly unsolvable riddle. The next winter they took their winged craft to the windswept beaches of North Carolina and soared into history, leaving behind an indelible mark on the twentieth century.

Tenacity and stubborn resolve were two things McCain knew well. They had kept him alive through the dark hours of confinement in the prison camps of North Vietnam. Long cast as a maverick, he was about to show the world the ingenuity that only his closest friends and family had appreciated. He, like the Wright brothers, was an aviator. What better place for a pilot to enjoy such a momentous occasion? The Wrights had been first in their century. He was about to be first in his. It was a hint no one in the audience seemed to catch.

McCain began his remarks slowly, thanking the crowd for their patience and acknowledging his birth-

day. Then, turning to the subject at hand, he seemed to savor each word. He carefully described the selection process—how he had considered and evaluated, deliberated, and debated, but in the end could choose only one. Over his shoulder, visible in the frame of the television camera, the woman in the crowd watched and listened intently.

It's with great pride and gratitude that I tell you I have found the right partner to help me stand up to those who value their privileges over their responsibilities, who put power over principle, and put their interests before your needs.¹

McCain, mindful of the pace, worked his delivery flawlessly, baiting the crowd with each line.

I found someone with an outstanding reputation for standing up to special interests and entrenched bureaucracies; someone who has fought against corruption and the failed policies of the past; someone who's stopped government from wasting taxpayer's money....

A few feet away, the woman in the stands behind McCain continued to watch. Above her dark and glistening eyes, tiny wrinkles creased her forehead as she listened, anticipating the next line, trying to figure out whom he was describing.

McCain moved on through his speech and finally came around to describing the qualities of his nominee as he ticked off a list of credentials: "... knows what it's like to worry about mortgage payments and health care and the cost of gasoline and groceries."

Behind him, the woman in the stands glanced down as the frown on her forehead gave way to a cloud of uncertainty across her face. Her eyes darted anxiously from side to side.

Still, McCain continued, "A standout high school point guard; a concerned citizen who became a member of the PTA, then a city council member, and then a mayor, and now a governor."²

In the stands the woman in the black shirt had a look of profound concentration. A new question now occupied her mind. She had been a member of the PTA. She worried about the mortgage and the gas and the groceries. The person McCain was describing sounded a lot like her.

"And that's why," McCain continued, his voice all but breaking with anticipation, "I am especially proud to say in the week we celebrate the anniversary of women's suffrage, a devoted ..."

Instantly, the woman's mouth fell open in a look of sudden realization. On her face was a message as plain as any written in print, visible for all who watched by television in the homes and cafes and shops across the

land. She was a woman who had spent long hours toiling at home, rearing her children, driving them to baseball games and pep rallies, always behind the scenes, always wondering if anyone noticed. Now someone like her was about to take the national stage.

By then everyone in the arena knew what was going to happen. McCain the maverick was about to announce a woman as his choice for vice president.

At the podium near center court, McCain took delight in the moment, pausing long enough in his speech for just the right effect, then completing the line with a smile, "... a devoted wife and a mother of five."

The crowd roared again. McCain glanced around, his eyes sparkling in the glaring light. "I am very pleased and very privileged to introduce to you the next Vice President of the United States ... Governor Sarah Palin of the great state of Alaska."

Around him the crowd sounded their approval with thunderous applause and stomping feet. Raising her hands high above her head, the woman in the stands behind him began to dance,³ and with her, the nation came alive.



WITHIN MINUTES OF JOHN MCCAIN'S ANNOUNCEMENT, newscasters and pundits across the nation swung into action. In their droll and erudite way, they digested the

scant information revealed about Palin in the remarks made before the Dayton crowd. By the end of the first hour, their commentary had exhausted the sparse details of her life and had moved on to a discussion of the implications in the event the nation and the world had just witnessed. As reporters talked, news of the announcement swept the countryside, and before the second hour had passed, everyone from Maine to California was enveloped in the story. Awakened and roused like never before, they jammed websites and blogs to search for information about the new vice presidential candidate, the woman from Wasilla.

In Juneau, the State of Alaska's official website received so many hits it crashed as technicians struggled to keep it online. In tiny Wasilla, the mayor's office where Palin once had served was swamped with requests for news about her life and family. Before the day was over, the streets would be filled with satellite trucks, rental cars, and people on foot, each one clamoring for details of her life.

Newscasters were right to note that Sarah Palin's nomination had changed the election's landscape. Since she was the first woman to occupy a Republican ticket for national office, her selection marked a shift in the party's center. Commentators were quick to point out she had been Wasilla's first female mayor and the first woman elected governor of Alaska, but they were wrong

to think the change they had noticed applied only to the current campaign.

Doubtless, the 2008 presidential election will be known as one of the most startling examples of electoral politics yet witnessed in our country's history. While one major party nominated the first African American for the nation's highest office, its rival party selected its first female for the nation's vice president. Regardless of the outcome, this moment in political history marks a time of unprecedented change, as barriers of gender and race once thought impenetrable shatter into millions of pieces.

Both presidential candidates, Barack Obama and John McCain, touted political reform and fresh perspectives in a heated contest of positions and ideas as diverse as the nation itself. Faced with the seemingly intractable issues of a slowing economy, war in Iraq, and expanding reliance on foreign oil, the American people were weary of partisan politics and bickering. The time had come to invigorate the campaign process—a process jaded with cynicism and gridlocked hope.

For Democrat contender Obama, a United States senator from Illinois, a new approach meant reliance on eloquence and unbridled enthusiasm for innovation. Fresh and untainted by politics as usual, his inexperience made him seem new and extraordinarily alive. Yet that inexperience—the very thing that made him

fresh—left him vulnerable to attack as young and untried, having just arrived in the Senate from the Illinois legislature. To balance the ticket, Obama turned to a familiar party leader and career politician, Senator Joseph Biden, as his running mate.

Across the aisle, John McCain, the Republican nominee and senator from Arizona, found himself in a precarious position. With approval ratings for the current Republican administration hovering at historic lows, McCain was forced to distance himself from the incumbent, President George W. Bush. To do that, McCain emphasized his role as a political maverick rather than party stalwart, a distinction not altogether untrue. Yet his experience—the thing that gave him cache with moderate voters—left him appearing old, outdated, and bound in the strictures of traditional politics. In need of adding balance, he selected as his running mate a governor—one who was female, young, and relatively unknown to the national political spotlight.

Sarah Palin's meteoric rise to political stardom seemed to have developed overnight. In reality, her ascent had been in the making for all of her forty-four years. In the pages that follow, you will find a survey of her life and career revealed in ten principles of leadership—qualities taken from the story of her life that offer a glimpse of who she is and how she thinks. These are the traits that have not only stood the 2008 election on

its head, but have provided a model for the innovative style required of politicians by the current demands of American culture.

Many of these leadership principles will seem counterintuitive, running against the traditional formula for political success: that your weakness can be your greatest strength; sacrificing your personal ambition can unlock the path to your destiny; and removing boundaries between your public and private life can insulate you from personal attack.

In her political life, Sarah Palin has displayed many of the traits that will define successful political leaders of this century. Although far from perfect, she harbors a deep Christian faith and dogged determination to make government work for the people, rather than people for the government. Palin's style of leadership invites each of us, whatever our political bent, to embrace challenge as opportunity and difficulty as hope, characteristics that have taken her from Wasilla to the doorstep of Washington and into the heart of the nation.