

Free Press Viewpoint

Palin, son 'out-law' make an odd couple

Sarah Palin and her "non son-in-law" are without question the odd couple.

Palin, you know, opted out of her elected responsibility to serve the state of Alaska to the best of her ability as governor. She is on a political hunt for support for the 2012 presidential election, disguised as a book tour.

Yes, she wrote a book. Doesn't everybody? Maybe she felt down deep that in the year and a half she served Alaska to the best of her ability, she had no more abilities left.

Mrs. Palin is on the wrong side of the Republican Party in her support of an upstate congressional race in New York, according to those who study political races. She's opposed to the conservative candidate in favor of a moderate who smacks of anything but Republicanism.

Too, Mrs. Palin is planning a political appearance in Iowa, but when news leaked out that she's asking \$100,000 to speak, well, the anti-Palin chatter escalated.

All the while, Mrs. Palin's non-son-in-law, Levi Johnston, has been making his own headlines. Reports are that he posed nude for the upcoming preholiday issue of Playgirl Magazine, and appeared on one of the major television networks to reveal supposedly explosive secrets.

He is called the "non son-in-law" because he fathered a child with Mrs. Palin's daughter and that union failed to end at the altar. He was the smiling young man taking his place alongside the family throughout Mrs. Palin's failed vice presidential bid in 2008.

It's good all of this less-than-positive stuff is coming out at this time. By the time the 2012 election rolls around, these events will have wilted on the vine.

Or so, Mrs. Palin hopes.

Don't get us wrong, Sarah Palin still has a significant following. She was the darling of the GOP after her selection as running mate for Sen. John McCain. Despite attempts to make her look bad by some, Mrs. Palin went her way, doing her thing and in the process continued to collect support.

A deeper probe into her mindset would probably reveal that she, too, hadn't expected Sen. McCain to win but this was an opportunity to begin laying the groundwork for her 2012 presidential bid.

There are some other names of women being tossed around as potential presidential timber, but there's one name that always bubbles up to the top: Sarah Palin. And with her name winning household status, she's already out front.

And the non son-in-law's closely held secrets about Mrs. Palin will fade, much like his Playgirl photo.

— Tom Dreiling, tad1@st-tel.net



Can we win in Afghanistan?

By Naeem Khan

It seems that there is lots of confusion in Washington these days in regard to Afghanistan.

Gen. Stanley McChrystal (the U.S. commander) wants more troops, not to chase the Taliban, but to safeguard the population of Afghanistan. This is his latest strategy to win the war by winning the hearts and minds of the Afghan people.

The commander in chief is clueless, his defense secretary is vacillating and the vice president is not in favor of McChrystal's proposals.

The argument put forth by the general is that we have learned some valuable lessons in Iraq. To defeat the insurgency, we must protect the population and win their hearts and minds. One of the main reasons for the subsiding violence in Iraq was the bribing of the Sunni population and approaching Shia dissidents.

The big problem with this strategy in Afghanistan is that the population he wants to safeguard just wants the foreigners out of their country. Bribing won't work in Afghanistan because they are different people than the Arabs.

Europeans have already played this strategy for a long time; their soldiers are not supposed to attack or fire on anybody unless they are fired on first in order to befriend the local population. But they sure are making lots of noise these days to protect the world from those crazed Taliban.

We have been pushing Pakistan to eliminate the Afghan as well as Pakistani Taliban. The Pakistani Army has had some success up in the mountains of Swat Valley, resulting in 2 million internally displaced refugees coming down into Mardan — my birthplace — and the surrounding areas. Encouraged by its victory, the army is contemplating taking the Taliban bases in South Waziristan near the Afghan border.

Is the Pakistani Army keen to go there and fight it out with the local Taliban? I would say no, because they still want to keep some of these Taliban intact for a rainy day because of India.

India is very much involved in Afghanistan and has acquired several consulates throughout the country, especially in Jalal Abad, which is close to Peshwar, the capital of the Northwest Frontier province, and in Kandahar, which is close to Quatta, the capital of the Bulchistan province. Although Gen. McChrystal, in his report to the president, indicated that India is making lots of mischief for Pakistan through these consulates, most Pakistanis believe they

Other Opinions

What people say in Kansas, elsewhere

are there to stay and have the blessing of President Karzai and the Obama Administration.

The big question is, after eight years of engagement in Afghanistan, can we win this war or even prevail there in the years to come? The answer is emphatically no. The reason is that the Taliban and insurgents know exactly what they want. They are single-minded, wanting to rid their land of the invaders. They are ruthless in their tactics and their motivation is not bound by religion or ancient ideology.

We have been told constantly that the main factor is their xenophobia. Even before the advent of Islam, they fought invaders and no invading army ever occupied Afghanistan for long. Afghans ruled the Indian subcontinent for more than 200 years and the people today are well versed in their history.

No foreigner has ever ruled them or prevailed there, and if President Obama is clueless, it is because he has not studied that history. He is trying to extricate our forces with some face-saving procedure, but has not found a way yet.

I believe that the president is ready to negotiate with the "good" Taliban, whatever that is. During an interview with your paper a few years ago, I mentioned that not all Taliban are associated with al Qaida, and now this administration is saying that most of the Taliban has nothing to do with al Qaida. It is al Qaida that is the potential threat to us.

Is there any amicable political solution in sight or even feasible? In my opinion, there is no honorable withdrawal from Afghanistan. It is irreconcilable. The problem is President Karzai, with the advice of the U.S. government, put the minority of Afghans, the Tajiks and Uzbeks, in the government as well as the security service, thereby sidelining the majority of Pushtuns.

It seems completely opposite of the Iraq situation. The Uzbeks committed tremendous atrocities against the Taliban, who were mainly Pushtuns. They have not forgotten and will avenge them. The Tajiks are in control of the national army, and they are fighting to control Kabul, the capital.

Another minority tribe, the Hazaras Shias, will fight the Pushtuns since their leader Masud

was killed by the Taliban. Although President Karzai is a Pushtun, he is thoroughly discredited by Pushtuns on both sides of the border and is considered an American puppet. He is not a credible leader and is running a corrupt government.

We should pull out of there and let them settle among themselves who will control Kabul. Meanwhile, their two important neighbors, Pakistan and Iran, will see to it that strategic geopolitical interests remain intact. They will never accept any hostile regimes in Kabul.

Pakistan would like to see the majority Pushtuns control Kabul and extend friendship toward Iran. Regardless of which ethnic group controls Kabul, they will have no room for al Qaida. We, the Americans, will see to that.

As far as the Taliban is concerned, the Pushtuns in Pakistan are a progressive people who look to the future and resent the Taliban's kind of Islam, which incidentally is a gift from Saudi Arabia, the late Pakistani dictator General Zia and the CIA in their efforts to force the Russians out of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

The tribal areas of Pakistan are not backward as portrayed by Western media. There are highly educated people from some of the tribal regions. The tribes like Afridis, Bungish, Khattaks, Mahmonds, Masuds, Orakzais and Yousafzias have produced generals, scientists, educators, doctors, engineers, writers and poets. My own maternal family is from Taank, South Waziristan. My cousin, Ms. Chaman, has four children, the first one is a major in the army, the second a dentist, the third a banker like his father and the fourth, a girl, a physician.

The reason for anti-American feeling in the tribal areas is that we are killing too many innocent civilians by drone attacks on the insurgents. We have killed about 30 important insurgents and close to 700 civilians. We call it collateral damage. This creates more anger and animosity toward the Americans, and lately against the Pakistani Army and its government.

It is mind-boggling for me that President Obama has received the Nobel Peace Prize while sending thousands more troops to Afghanistan. He has killed more innocent Pakistanis by drone attacks than President Bush.

In conclusion, I say that there is no winning in Afghanistan and in the process we have destabilized a nuclear state, Pakistan. Is there any solution to this conflict? Perhaps by diplomacy and political friendship, but only that.

Naeem Khan, a former resident of Colby and a graduate of Colby Community College, now lives in Manhattan.

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Tax break could be a shock in April

To the Editor:

Most of you who earn paychecks that have taxes withheld may have noticed that your paycheck is higher than normal. You may have missed IRS Publication 15-T, Notice to Employees, Changes in Income Tax Withholding.

This appears to be the brilliant idea of our Obama Administration to get money moving into the economy. What is not plainly put to the American taxpayer, however, is that when your federal income taxes are due April 15, most taxpayers are going to be in for a shock. The money that should have been deducted



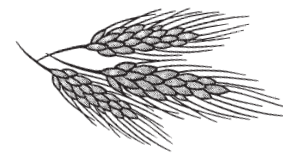
Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

from your pay just might be due and payable. This "sleight of hand" prank did indeed move money into the economy. In fact, we

may have felt warm, fuzzy feelings toward our president. A suggestion to the American taxpayer is to put every penny that should have been withheld from your paycheck into savings, because it just may be owed to the IRS on April 15.

Beverly Lang, Colby



Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

