

"You'd vote for her because she has nice legs?"

Sarah Palin rose from being an obscure governor of an obscure state, Alaska, to being the vice presidential nominee on the 2008 Republican ticket.

Her speech at the Republican Convention in St. Paul took the country by storm. And, she rescued a dead McCain campaign. No one familiar with politics believed John McCain had a chance to become the 45th president of the United States. No honest person, that is. But, the process to determine the Republican Party's nominee for president has been one of "it's his turn" and McCain was up.

The Democratic primary campaign had been one between two media darlings - Hillary Clinton and the heretofore unknown Senator from Illinois, Barack Obama. The Republican primary campaign for president had become one between dull, duller and dullest. McCain was facing a final two-plus months campaigning with no media coverage. He changed that with the surprise announcement that Sarah Palin would be his running mate.

After her appearance in St. Paul on September 3rd, Palin brought attention back to the Republican ticket and the Republican Party. The dominant liberal media gleefully reported over and over with glee that her eldest daughter was an unmarried, expectant mom.

That did not fit with the conservative image Sarah Palin presented.

But she was not the stereotypical Republican in many ways. First, she was attractive. And she had been a union member. And, she was accomplished in her own right. She had won elections on her own merits and her own efforts - not by a political machine handing it to her. She had defeated an incumbent governor - not a last minute Maryland transplant who came back to Illinois at the last minute to contest the machine candidate. She had governed - she didn't vote "present" on every controversial issue to safeguard a run for president. And she had no links to radicals.

But, because she was so new to national politics, she had not had an opportunity or time to cultivate relationships with reporters or anchors. Relationships often built by leaking confidential information to favorite people in the media in return for them going easy on you or praising you publicly.

Democrats were aghast that the Republicans had stolen their "issue." In their minds, it was their call as to whom the first legitimate female national candidate would be. Hillary Clinton had tried valiantly but couldn't overcome her husband and lost the nomination to the unknown Obama. In 1984, Walter Mondale had tried to pull a rabbit out the hat by choosing an unknown New York Representative, Geraldine Ferraro, as his running mate. Democrats would now say that Sarah Palin, who was a governor, from where almost all presidents originate, was unqualified. None felt similarly about Ferraro, who was unknown outside her



Congressional district. And, unlike Ferraro, Hillary Clinton, and other leading women in the Democratic Party, Sarah Palin was fairly attractive. She had been a beauty queen contestant. And she had been an athlete. Imagine Hillary leading a fast break, Feinstein on a moose hunt or Pelosi breaking a sweat.

Palin's family was picturesque. Democrats had to worry that having an unmarried daughter pregnant would draw from their voter base - such is Dems province. While unwed pregnancies are not at all unusual in the country, Democrats also want to believe it is only families of their party in which that happens.

Because Sarah Palin was chosen quickly and thrust into the national spotlight without preparation, she and her family did not have closets full of clothes provided them by adoring or demanding lobbyists. So, when she arrived in St. Paul, McCain and his obscenely wealthy wife (who came by her wealth the old-fashioned way, she inherited it) did not want to flaunt that differential in wealth and style so the Republican campaign folks shopped for Palin and her family.

And, while the Democrats would have you believe that, under the same circumstances, they would have gone to Ross or T.J. Maxx, Republicans with donated money chose Sax Fifth Avenue and the

purchases added up to a lot of money. Palin did not shop - she chose from those preselected for her and the family members by a professional shopper.

Frankly, most Republican men didn't know the quality or cut of her clothes. And most working class women she related to would only be envious, not jealous, as the Democrats were when they found out about the shopping spree. Michelle Obama can wear borrowed clothes but that's different. Democrats had to find things to criticize about the attractive Sarah Palin and they had to find them fast - hence, the furor over clothes she wore but were not hers to keep.

Granted, Sarah Palin did not have a great grasp on foreign affairs. She hadn't spent a career in public office, traveling around the globe at public expense, meeting foreign leaders because of an elected office. She was a real person, living in the most hard-scrabble place on earth - Alaska. So, when a Katie Couric, dumb as a rock herself, edited together a piece to make Sarah Palin appear even more uninformed, it concerned even some Republicans. As though Joe Biden was a Mensa candidate who could effectively deal in foreign affairs if thrust into that position. When Biden said that FDR went on television to inform Americans about the stock market crash, the liberal media let that faux pas pass with little comment.

Now, the shoe is on the other foot. After defending herself from endless charges of corruption, none true, and incurring substantial legal fees, Sarah Palin resigned the governor's office in Alaska and, as many before her have done, went about making some real money. She wrote a book. Had she wanted to, she could have done what countless Democrats before her have done - wrote the book while holding elected office - but she chose a more honorable way.

There will be those who say she didn't write the book - that it was "ghostwritten" for her. The same people never questioned whether John F. Kennedy's "Profiles in Courage" was written for him. But, that's politics.

Every media appearance she's made has resulted in increased ratings and huge crowds, including with Oprah Winfrey, who endorsed Barack Obama in the 2008 election.

Newsweek is a notoriously liberal-slanted magazine. Years ago, it was an interesting publication. Not so much anymore. In their current issue, they ran stories about Sarah Palin. As the cover indicates, it was hardly an objective, unbiased story.

Sarah Palin may never be president of the United States. But, who in their right mind predicted that Barack Obama would ever be president of the United States even three years ago? Anything is possible. She wouldn't have to travel as far from anonymity as he did.

The photo used on the Newsweek cover is a photo shot for a single purpose - use in a *Runner's World* article on her passion for running. Fitness. Can you tell? The goal of *Newsweek* was to diminish her standing as a serious political figure. My reaction wasn't what they were hoping for.

Except for beauty pageant photos and photos of her in basketball uniform as point guard "Sarah the Barracuda" from awhile back, everything we've seen of her has been in professional attire. Hillary wears only pantsuits because she doesn't want anyone to see her legs.

From the purloined photo used by *Newsweek*, you can see that Sarah Palin shouldn't have that concern.

Knowing how to get my wife's attention (she of the opposite political party), I commented on what fine legs Sarah Palin had. She said, "You'd vote for her because she has nice legs?" Well, I have to be honest. I've supported candidates without nice legs because I thought they had integrity. Because I thought they'd stand on principle. Because I thought they'd honor campaign promises. Because I thought they'd do a good job, because they were the better choice. And, using those criteria to determine where my vote went and whom I would support - maybe even manage their campaign - I have been betrayed too often.

So, yes, I'd vote for her because she has nice legs. I've tried everything else.