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KARLA MASS: The week's most talked about book

Sept. 5- 11

McClatchy Interactive

A storm is brewing in the bid for the White House; and Sarah Palin, the 11th governor of Alaska and Republican vice presidential candidate, is the eye of the storm.

"Sarah: How a Hockey Mom Turned Alaska's Political Establishment Upside Down," by Kaylene Johnson will convince readers that nobody knows Sarah Palin better than Sarah Palin.

Sarah Palin: A hockey mom

Johnson introduces a feisty, young girl who loves sports, fishing and hunting caribou. And as part of an adventurous family, she often hikes and competes in races throughout the summer.

Palin's hometown of Wasilla is a splash of color in spring and a snow-covered canvas in winter. The town of Wasilla, established in 1917 with the construction of the Alaska Railroad and



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Sarah fishes on Lake Lucille.

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incorporated in 1974, boasts a population of about 6,500 residents, mountain ranges and beautiful coastal areas.

Her industrious life, then and now, revolves around nature and just about any outdoor venture:

The family often packed up and drove fifteen miles to Hatcher Pass, a scenic expanse of alpine tundra tucked between jagged peaks in the Talkeetna Mountains. In summer, the family hiked, picked berries and followed the trails. In winter, they skied and hunted ptarmigan, an Alaska game bird.

Intimate details are scarce, so don't expect any alarming revelations or juicy tabloid gossip; instead enjoy a "straight from the source" dialogue of family history and lofty political ambitions.

Sarah Palin: A political trailblazer

Palin, a maverick who embraced her role as housewife and hockey mom, makes her mark in politics as a reformer when she serves two terms on the city council and as mayor of Wasilla. And in her current role as governor of Alaska, she's equally as stubborn when it comes to change.

She dons "boxing gloves" in the political arena as she invests new ideas and new energy in an effort to change an Alaskan government riddled with corruption.

But can she successfully juggle a demanding political career and a family? It's the one question that keeps resurfacing (A few of her closest friends and supporters weren't convinced that she was ready to be governor at the time). But under Palin's watch, her administration passes two major pieces of legislation – an overhaul of the state's ethics laws and a process to construct a gas pipeline.

From the shortlist to the spotlight, Palin's gubernatorial victory and tenure, along with her recent, history making political nod, has attracted national attention. Today, she's recognized wherever she goes, and often stops for a minute to chat with locals at the community grocery store.

Sarah Palin: Impressive

A conversation with the author is also revealing: We both agree that good timing has nothing to do with her sold out biography ... good insight, maybe. She is also the author of "Portrait of the Alaska Railroad," and "Trails Across Time."

Q: What is most impressive about Sarah Palin and her story?

Johnson: What impressed me most was her fearlessness in standing up to the establishment, first in her hometown of Wasilla and later to her own Republican party on the state level. After being appointed to the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, she turned in her GOP party boss for ethics violations. She took a huge political gamble, but my impression when I spoke with her was not that it was so much a calculated risk as it was taking a stand between right and wrong.

Q: How has she changed since you interviewed her for the book?

Johnson: Her life has changed dramatically on both personal and political levels in the past months. Even so, I've not sensed a change in her or her core values.

Q: Are you as surprised as the rest of the nation about her historical vice presidential nod?

Johnson: Many Alaskans fully anticipated that Palin would move on to the national scene sometime after her term(s) as Governor. Most of us didn't anticipate that she would debut on the national scene quite so soon. I'm surprised but not shocked. Her name has been mentioned as a possible VP pick for some time.

Q: If you could rewrite your book, what would you add?

Johnson: The book is about her childhood, her growing up years, and how she took on the entrenched political establishment in Alaska to win the race for Governor. If I could, I would add chapters about her achievements and challenges once she took office. Certainly becoming McCain's vice presidential running mate is an intriguing chapter to a story that continues to unfold.

Q: Describe the Sarah Palin you know.

Johnson: She's a tough, competitive woman with a strong inner compass. Adversity just seems to strengthen her resolve. She loves her job and has tremendous energy. She's close to her family, who provides an extended network of support. She has a real gift for connecting with people on a personal level. The biggest mistake Palin's competitors have made over the years has been to underestimate her.

So, why not just Google "Sarah Palin" and click on the numerous tidbits of duplicate information posted on the world-wide Web? I'll give you one good reason, "Sarah: How a Hockey Mom Turned Alaska's Political Establishment Upside Down" offers something new. It's the go-to guide for truth, not hearsay.

Sarah: How a Hockey Mom Turned Alaska's Political Establishment Upside Down

Author: Kaylene Johnson

Publisher: Epicenter Press, Inc.

Publication Date: April 2008



[Listen to an excerpt from *How a Hockey Mom Turned Alaska's Political Establishment Upside Down*](#)

A STORM OF BIOGRAPHIES

The Hardest Working Man: How James Brown Saved the Soul of America

Author: James Sullivan

Publisher: Penguin Group (USA)

Publication Date: November 2008

Living the Dream: Hannah Montana and Miley Cyrus

Author: Susan Janic

Publisher: ECW Press

Publication Date: September 2008

Stori Telling

Authors: Tori Spelling with Hilary Liftin

Publisher: Simon & Schuster

Publication Date: March 2008

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