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Weighing her options: a career-counseling guide for Sarah Palin

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By Patrick Hruby - The Washington Times

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Reports of Sarah Palin's demise are almost certainly premature.

Oh, sure: Mrs. Palin and Fox News announced an end to their increasingly strained relationship last week, and yes, some observers have been quick to write her political and pop culture obituary, with one writer comparing her to "a playground great who never made it to the NBA."

Still, those who know Mrs. Palin best caution against writing her off.

"I think people underestimate her all the time," filmmaker Steve Bannon, who made the 2011 pro-Palin film "The Undeclared," told ABC News. "She has two things the factotums in the Republican Party can't replicate. (A): charisma and (B): the ability to connect to working men and women in this country."

With that in mind, what's next for Mrs. Palin? The Washington Times considers the possibilities:

Daytime television talk host

Pros: Okay, pop quiz. Which of the following people has not hosted a daytime gabfest?

- A) Tyra Banks
- B) Sharon Osbourne
- C) Tempestt Bledsoe
- D) Tony Danza

Surprise! The correct answer is none of the above. Which means the competition isn't exactly the 1985 Chicago Bears. Mrs. Palin has the name and fame to help fill an ongoing post-Oprah void. Does she have the game? Her much-anticipated, much-dissected guest host appearance on NBC's "Today" show last spring went off without a major hitch, with Mrs. Palin appearing comfortable and relaxed in front of the camera.

Cons: Daytime talk is decidedly apolitical. Would Palin supporters accustomed to her endorsements of liberty and denunciations of the Obama administration be content with harmless chit-chat about a minor celebrity's new perfume line?

Odds: 8-1. A show would allow Mrs. Palin to go head-to-head with 2008 nemesis Katie Couric, which might be a draw. However, it also would make Mrs. Palin a peer with newly-minted daytime host Kris Jenner, which might be a major disincentive.

Radio talk host

Pros: The radio talk market is dominated by outspoken political conservatives lobbing verbal grenades at big government, silly liberals, backstabbing Republicans-in-name-only, the lamestream media and the pathetic sheeple who blindly follow all of the preceding. Sound familiar?

Cons: From Rush Limbaugh to Sean Hannity, Glenn Beck to Mark Levin, the field is crowded and competitive.

Odds: 10-1. Hosting a daily show is a preparation-intensive grind, and Mrs. Palin likely could earn as much money for less effort by focusing on public speaking. "Because of her need to replace the money she will no longer be getting from Fox, I anticipate a number of paid speaking engagements to socially conservative groups around the country," said Richard Goedkoop, a recently retired LaSalle University communications professor and broadcasting expert.

Sportscaster

Pros: Mrs. Palin earned a journalism degree from the University of Idaho and once worked as a sports anchor for an Alaska television station. Also, she's handy with catch phrases. And knows a bit about hockey.

Cons: Sports broadcasting juggernaut ESPN once hired Mr. Limbaugh to appear on an NFL pre-game show. Mr. Limbaugh promptly said that Pro Bowl (and African-American) quarterback Donovan McNabb was overrated because "The media has been very desirous that a black quarterback do well." Things did not end well.

Odds: 500-1. The only thing sports fans hate more than mixing games and politics are broadcast blackouts.

Political candidate

Pros: Mrs. Palin already has governing experience, money, national name recognition, charisma, a populist touch and a large group of loyal supporters, some of whom went to Iowa as unpaid volunteers to build the infrastructure for a 2012 presidential bid that never materialized.

Cons: Mrs. Palin is a polarizing figure, even within Republican ranks; her premature abdication of Alaska's governorship raised questions about her commitment to holding political office; after getting roughed up by pundits, late-night comedians and "Saturday Night Live's" Tina Fey during the 2008 campaign, she may not want to run again.

Odds: 5-1. Much depends on the future direction of the GOP. "David Brooks of the New York Times recently suggested that it might be time for the Republican Party to become the functional equivalent of two parties," Mr. Goedkoop said. "One representing the few moderates still in place in the northeast, mid-west, and west coast and a more conservative wing anchored primarily in the south and mountain states. I have a feeling that Mrs. Palin could win the Presidential nomination of that conservative, Tea Party group if she had the desire to do so."

Pundit

Pros: Fox News head Roger Ailes said in 2011 that he hired Mrs. Palin because "she was hot and got ratings." Mrs. Palin's star may have cooled since 2008, but she remains a national figure and is now a free agent. Perhaps CNN — in the middle of a major on-air talent shakeup under new chief Jeff Zucker — will bring Mrs. Palin aboard.

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Odds: Even. Mrs. Palin may not sign an exclusive deal with a particular network, but it's hard to imagine she won't be a regular talking head. Mrs. Palin hinted as much in a recent interview with

Breitbart.com, stating, "We can't just preach to the choir ... I know the country needs more truth-telling in the media, and I'm willing to do that."

Children's book author

Pros: Ms. Couric wrote two. Madonna wrote a bunch. Professional football pass catcher-cum-diva Terrell Owens has a children's book. So does former NBA star/one-man human carnival Dennis Rodman. If patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel, then writing a children's book — by which we mean "finding a talented illustrator and showing up for a few book signings" — is the first refuge of a celebrity looking to diversify their fame portfolio.

Cons: None. Would undoubtedly provide comic fodder for late-night monologues, but at this point in Mrs. Palin's career, what's left to joke about?

Odds: 1-2. Frankly, we're stunned this hasn't happened already.

Advice columnist

Pros: Mrs. Palin has — to put it mildly — been through a lot. Why not share some of what she's learned about coping with the ups and downs of life? "She'd be a great advice columnist because she's what people who seek advice want," said Florida-based advice columnist April Masini. "They're looking for a strong point of view. They want you to be their moral compass. Palin answers reporter questions because she has to, but really, she'd like to tell the reporters and the rest of us what we should be doing. And eventually, she will."

Cons: When was the last time a serious politician wrote advice columns on the side? (Come to think of it, that would be kind of awesome, especially if it were an official Vice Presidential duty. Is it too late for a Constitutional amendment?)

Odds: 500-1. And too bad. A 2008 live advice debate between Vice President Joe Biden and Mrs. Palin would have been amazing.

Infomercial spokes-human

Pros: Mrs. Palin is a fitness enthusiast. She's youthful-looking. She could sell skin cream, exercise videos — eyeglasses. She could host a QVC show tomorrow.

"You could see her hosting a late night infomercial for a workout DVD," said a West Coast public relations executive. "'The Mama Grizzly Workout.' The moves will be inspired by her hunting days in Alaska and her jogs in Arizona. She can also use the videos as a platform to further the Republican message of personal responsibility — what's a better way of taking responsibility for yourself than working out at home? Who needs Michelle Obama's nanny state vegetable regulations when you have the Mama Grizzly workout to keep you fit?"

Cons: We really can't see any. Said the public relations executive: "The success of the workout DVD will inspire a fitness empire, similarly to the way Bethenny Frankel expanded her line of Skinny Girl products. Soon, you'll see Mama Grizzly workout attire, dumbbells, jump ropes, water bottles; eventually, you'll see Palin on the covers of Fortune and Forbes."

Odds: 1,000-1. Selling out is definitely a "Real Housewives" cast member move — and since Mrs. Palin reportedly was making \$1 million annually at Fox, she likely doesn't need the money.

Reality show contestant

Pros: In 2010, Mrs. Palin's reality show "Sarah Palin's Alaska" was the TLC network's most-watched series premiere, drawing nearly 5 million viewers. Mrs. Palin's daughter Bristol enjoyed a nice run on "Dancing With the Stars." And who wouldn't watch Mrs. Palin go into lipstick pit bull mode on "Survivor?"

Cons: Mrs. Palin's TLC show lost nearly half its audience after four episodes, and Bristol's reality show "Life's a a Tripp" was a ratings bust for the Lifetime network.

Odds: 3-1 for "Dancing With the Stars"; 50-1 for everything else. Regardless of political persuasion, it's safe to assume that most Americans would rather see Mrs. Palin on "DWTS" than former Congressman Tom DeLay. Which, regrettably, really happened.
