

Cliff Heckathorn and his wife Margaret visit with staff members of the Coronado Museum Tuesday. The couple, along with Heckathorn's father Jim, were on their way back to Wasilla, Alaska, after visiting Cliff's brother in Florida. They stopped by Dorothy's House and the Land of Oz and discussed the recent presidential race and one of their hometown residents, vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin.

By EARL WATT • Daily Leader

When Cliff and Margaret Heckathorn stopped by Liberal's Coronado Museum and Dorothy's House, they were able to share a story of a hometown girl of their own who made a magical journey and still realized that there was no place like home.

Cliff and Margaret call Wasilla, Alaska, their hometown, and they were passing through on their way back home after visiting family in Florida.

Their journey took them, along with Cliff's father Jim, to Washington, D.C., Wyoming, Iowa, Mount Rushmore in South Dakota and through the south.



Liberal, Kan., also made it on their itinerary.

Wasilla was recently put on the national map when resident Sarah Palin was selected as the Republican vice presidential nominee. Palin grew up in Wasilla and was the mayor before running for and winning the governor's office in Alaska.

Cliff and Margaret knew Palin.

“I’ve known her from NRA banquets,” Cliff said. “Margaret held Sarah’s new baby at the governor’s banquet last spring.”

As a mother, Palin received high marks from Cliff and Margaret.

“The kids are well-behaved in public,” Cliff said. “When Todd (Palin) says something, they pay attention.”

Palin has been under constant scrutiny by the national media, and Cliff didn’t believe the criticism was fair or accurate.

“They’ve picked on her hard,” he said.

“They went after her like a pit bull,” Margaret said. “I think she scared them. She has a rogue attitude about government. She still believes it is for the people, of the people and by the people.”

Cliff and Margaret were excited to hear that Palin had been selected as the vice presidential nominee, but they were concerned about losing her, too. Palin has been the people’s governor, and that’s why she doesn’t spend much time in the isolated capital of Juneau.

“Juneau wouldn’t exist if it weren’t the capital,” Margaret said.

Juneau is isolated. There are no highways to Juneau. The only way in is by boat or plane.

“We’ve tried to vote the capital out of Juneau,” Margaret said. “Only Juneau likes the capital in Juneau.”

When Alaskans see high travel expenses for Palin and her family, they understand why, even if it was not presented that way by the national media.

Alaskans are also in favor of drilling on their own land, including the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve.

“Ninety percent of Alaskans want drilling,” Cliff said. “There will not be any ecological damage or affect the caribou at all. I have pictures of a cow and a calf on an oil pad. There’s no risk to them at all. This has all been driven by the Sierra Club and East Coast interests. It’s all out of state.”

With the renegade Palin back home in Alaska, these Wasilla residents were already looking ahead to 2012.

“I saw what Sarah had to say after returning to Alaska, and she’s right — women will have to work harder,” Cliff said. “Biden can plagiarize a speech, and it’s no big deal. But everything she did was blown up. The media was afraid of her. They put her under a 40-power microscope and turned a blind eye to everyone else. I would love to see Sarah run in 2012.”