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Law School Lovebirds Enjoy Simpatico in Married Life

By Erin Geiger Smith
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Leah Edelman (left) is an associate in the Washington D.C. office of Fish & Richardson with her husband Martin Strauch of Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP.

When one thinks of law school, the words “true love” may not spring to mind. But law school romances led to long-term marriage for both the Democratic presidential and vice presidential candidates—Hillary Clinton met Bill when both attended Yale Law School, and Tim Kaine and his wife, Anne Holton, met at Harvard Law School.

Of course, it isn’t just those seeking high political office who met and fell in love during the three years spent muddling through casebooks. Found in Big Law and elsewhere, these high-achieving duos, who came together at a pivotal point in their lives and go on to make lifetime commitments to each other, possess a unique understanding of their partners’ strengths, vulnerabilities and challenges.

The couples interviewed here say their mates provide a sympathetic and informed ear and—for the most part—are patient about the time constraints and client demands that come with a lawyer’s job.

Martin Strauch, now an associate in the corporate department of Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson's Washington, D.C., office, was a second-year student at the University of Florida Levin College of Law when he offered to help first-year students understand torts, a gesture made in hopes of spending time with then-1L Leah Edelman. The ruse worked; the two began dating and got married after she graduated in 2011.

They both see benefits to a shared profession. "We understand what the other one is experiencing in the general sense, so we can be more supportive," Edelman said.

Edelman, now a patent litigator with Fish & Richardson, said that early on she saw advantages from the relationship. She took the bar exam a year after Strauch did and had the benefit of his experience. She also had a bit of remorse when it was her turn to study for the test.

"In retrospect, I was probably very distracting when I came home from my internship" the year he took the exam, she said.

She says that because they work in different practice areas, they don't feel like they do the same job. (Strauch is on the phone "maybe 200 times more" than she is, Edelman said. They both agree her skills as a litigator mean she usually wins any arguments.)

"I wanted get a semester under my belt before I started dating," she said.



David Eder and Sara Eder

David Eder was also a year ahead of Sara Eder at the University of Oregon School of Law. They met before she had even officially started classes, when David, then a second-year student, approached her during an orientation event. David asked her out during their initial conversation, but she told him no.

He almost immediately asked again, and they went out just a week later.

Sara works in the employee and labor relations department for Portland's natural gas utility company and has not practiced law. David has always enjoyed working closely with clients, eventually joining his twin brother's criminal defense and personal injury firm, Thuemmel Uhle & Eder in Portland.

"You want to talk about your day and what goes on, especially with trial work or bigger cases," David said. "It's nice to be able to know that Sara understands."

The two now have a six-year-old son and a four-year-old daughter, and are thankful they have only one practicing lawyer in the family. "We try cases around the state," David said. "It would be hard to have two people in different places and have a family. We have a pretty good balance."

Only one time in two decades have Shannon and John Ramirez, both litigators in Houston, been in a trial at the same time. It was before their youngest daughter, now age five, was born, but when they already had three young children (now 14, 12 and 10). Shannon, a LeClairRyan shareholder, said it was "the most stressful time ever." It was a balance of parental responsibility of trial preparation personalities. Because John prefers to go straight back to the office to work at the end of a court day to prepare for his next day, Shannon took the evening shift at home, preparing for her trial after the children went to bed.

Thankfully, Shannon says, her ability to come and go from the office as necessary makes most days more manageable, and she enjoys having a partner with nearly the same job. They met while both students at South Texas College of Law.

Their similar careers mean they can bounce ideas off each other and speak in a sort of shorthand.

“If he says, ‘I have a depo of a doctor,’ I know he’s not going to get home before 6 p.m. because doctors usually want their depositions late,” she said.

Tyler Gerking and Amelia Miazad both worked in insurance recovery, after graduating from the University of California, Berkeley School of Law. Gerking, now a partner at Farella Braun + Martel in San Francisco, and Miazad met in a contracts class at the beginning of their first year. They graduated in 2002 and married in 2004.

“We both love [Berkeley] so much because we met here,” Miazad said. She joined the law school’s staff in 2011, where she’s served as executive director of the school’s international and advanced degree programs. The change from firm life has made their home life a little easier, with Miazad being able to walk to work at the law school and to their two daughters’ school to attend afternoon activities.

Though couples who meet in law school all share a similar educational background, Gerking, a serious athlete who recently ran an ultramarathon, and the Afghanistan-born Miazad took shared learning even further.

“As a deal for marrying each other, Tyler learned Farsi, and I learned to ski,” Miazad said.

And should you be wondering, the Republican ticket is law school-romance free: Donald Trump did not attend law school. Vice presidential candidate Mike Pence did, but met his wife Karen at church.

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