

## MEREDITH AND MARK PARENTI:

# MARRIED TO THE LAW



BY JOE SURKIEWICZ

**M**eet Meredith and Mark Parenti, two bright, articulate and committed third-year day students who just happen to be husband and wife. It's a relationship that goes back to a first date when both were college freshmen—and culminated when they married the fall before entering law school.

"People always ask us what it's like to go to law school with your spouse," says Meredith, seated with Mark in the law review offices. "Well, one positive thing is that we've been going through hell together! So we have a lot of empathy for each other. It's also good that we can be study partners."

Mark adds, "We've been able to support each other. I'm sure we wouldn't have accomplished as much otherwise. Each person understands what the other is trying to achieve."

And those accomplishments have given them a high profile at the School of Law. Meredith is editor-in-chief of the *Maryland Law Review*; Mark is on the law review as articles editor and is president of the Maryland Law School chapter of the Federalist Society.

"They've both done exceptionally well in their course work," notes Associate Dean Mark Sargent. "And Mark has done a remarkable job with the Federalist Society to improve the intellectual ferment on campus."

Question: Can this togetherness thing be carried too far?

Apparently not—at least not for this successful, hard-charging couple. After graduation they'll be heading to Meredith's hometown of Houston, Texas, where both Parentis have landed clerkships with U.S. District Court judges.

Note the plural: While they'll be working in the same building, they won't be working for the same judge. They made sure of that. "We listed the judges and divided them up before applying," Mark says.

"We didn't want to compete with each other for the same jobs," Meredith explains.

It's a reflection of a pragmatism that not only helped the Parentis survive law school, but allowed them to thrive. Take, for example, the potential problems that can arise when a husband and wife take the same course.

"We usually don't consult each other before class," Meredith says. "But we get along fine. We both like to debate and get into discussions." Then, laughing: "But sometimes Mark will raise his hand and say, 'I have to disagree with Mrs. Parenti!'"

Their involvement in local politics was a major influence in choosing the School of Law. In Annapolis, Meredith was elected chair of the Republican City Central Committee and Mark managed a campaign for state's attorney.

"We wanted to stay in the state. And both of us being active in public life played a big role in our decision to go to Maryland," Mark explains. "It's a good, solid, traditional law school that has stayed away from fads. I feel comfortable taking my degree anywhere in the country."

While the Parentis entered law school together and will begin their professional lives on parallel paths, they took different routes in choosing law as a career. And neither Parenti has set rigid timetables or strict career goals. "We'll try not to overlap our careers too much," Meredith says.

One thing is certain, though. No kids, at least for a while. "The legal profession is not all that family friendly," Meredith says.

"We can't even get a dog," Mark adds.

Finally, can the Parentis offer any advice for married couples attending law school together?

"I've known couples who went to different law schools, and it seemed much harder," Mark notes. "If you're going to the same school, at least you get to see your spouse more often."

Adds Meredith: "But you need to be supportive of each other. Don't get wrapped up in stress, and make sure you have a life outside of law school—like doing fun things on weekends."

And the drawbacks?

"Because law school teaches you how to argue, you can't use law school tricks to get out of doing your fair share of housework!" says Mark, grinning.

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