



Loretta (left) and Jalie
in law school

Half Sisters

by Loretta Howieson Kallas
and M. Jalie Meinecke

Back in August of 1997, a couple of gals sat down next to each other the first day of lecture for Ted Lauer's first presentation on criminal law. One hailed from Cody, Wyoming, had a 17-month-old (who is now 28) and a husband finishing his degree in engineering. The other was an over-cafeinated blonde who had recently graduated from the University of Wyoming with a less than useful degree in Journalism, and who was single and overly social. At first blush, we didn't have much in common. Then, the review of the story of Tom Horn united twin flames in an eternal friendship dedicated to fun, camaraderie, love, support, balance and loyalty. The half-sisters were born.

Throughout the three years of law school, we, M. Jalie Meinecke and Loretta Howieson Kallas, found that the best way to balance the rigors and stress of school was by doing it together. After the first three semesters of law school, course work diverged a bit due to Jalie's interest in civil matters, tax and estate law, while Loretta was more in tune with natural resources and criminal matters. While our studies diverged, we stuck together to help each other balance real life outside of school. Loretta by helping care for Jalie's child, by both working as bartenders, by studying together, but



Napa to Sonoma

also taking the time to enjoy life. We learned how to balance work, home and school together.

Over the past 23 years, things have changed, and yet remained the same. Both of us have practiced continuously since graduating from law school. Between the two of us we now have seven children, wonderful husbands, busy full-time practices, but still deal with the same stresses essentially all lawyers deal with in day-to-day practice. Jalie is in private practice in Cody and has to balance the responsibilities of her family and children with the often times unrealistic expectations of private clients and the financial burdens of run-



ning a small business. Loretta has been the Uinta County and Prosecuting Attorney for many years and has to balance her family life with the often times unrealistic expectations of the community she serves, while working way too many hours for government pay.

After law school, we had to find ways to stay connected and continue to nurture the friendship that had bloomed while living in Laramie. We both knew that life was about its experiences and creating memories. Certainly, we couldn't foster that by sitting behind our desks day in and day out. I (Jalie) had been a long-distance runner since high school, but had never done anything more than a 5K. In 2009 I ran my first half marathon with my cousin from Denver and became hooked. Running long distances was a great way to manage stress and blow off steam after a long day at the office. It was such a fun experience that I invited Loretta along to run the next one with me. We decided to pick a fun destination for our running excursion to keep us motivated and to create a weekend destination where we could meet and spend a few days together, and assuage our guilt at the same time, by running a half marathon. Thus, we both became "runners" and developed a love for destination half marathons.

In 2009 we traveled to our first race together in



Yosemite pre-race



Napa to Sonoma finish line



Glacier Half Marathon

"A favorite was running the Joshua Tree. Due to the extreme heat, the race did not begin until 8:00 pm and went into the night. Headlamps were required. We took beautiful photos of the miles long trail of runners ahead of us with their headlamps gleaming beneath the twilight stars."

Dallas, Texas, for the Big D Half Marathon. From there, we found an ideal "excuse" to leave our obligations to our families and practices behind, if only for a long weekend at a time. We also found that the physical challenge of training maintained our health and provided time to think and process work and life in general, and the trips—that was the icing on the cake. These trips meant that we could travel, explore new places and shop and eat... with a side diversion of a short little 13.1-mile run.

Since 2009, we have run ten half marathons together and several shorter 5K races. We decided to start running the vacation race circuits, which are all races that are hosted in our nation's beautiful national parks. Together, we've seen Yellowstone, Rocky Mountain National Park, the Grand Canyon, Glacier National Park, Yosemite, Mount Zion, the Joshua Tree and Mount Rainier. A favorite was running the Joshua Tree. Due to the extreme heat, the race did not begin until 8:00 p.m. and went into the night. Headlamps were required. We took beautiful photos of the miles-long trail of runners ahead of us with their headlamps gleaming beneath the twilight stars. It is a moment that will be remembered forever. We have also run other races not in the National Parks, a favorite being the half marathon between Napa and Sonoma in Wine Country. Our Airbnb was in the top of a barn and the roof was so slanted only Loretta could stand fully upright in the bathroom. There was no air conditioning. But we both decided we would book that particular spot again simply due to the nights' conversation, laughs and camaraderie. During the race, we stopped along the way to sample the grapes of the vineyards and spent the evening after the race in Napa sampling wine flights. It was amazing. A few weeks later, the entire route of the race was decimated by wild-fires, and we knew that our experience was truly

once in a lifetime. We'd never be able to return and repeat the experience. We were both so thankful we had taken the time to do it when we did. Delay would have killed the dream.

Our next race is booked in February for the Everglades National Park in Florida. Our race times have gotten slower over the years, and we have walked a couple, due to many different issues. Sometimes our bodies have betrayed us due to age or injury. Sometimes we simply have not had time to train due to work and family obligations. However, we still go. We still make the time, because it's the experience and friendship that matters. We walk if we have to. Because life is more than the practice of law. The moments in between are what truly matter. We always remember that when we are on our death beds, we will never wish that we had filed one more pleading, attended one more hearing or argued one more case. We will wish that we had more morning coffee in a sunrise; enjoyed more smiles and laughter over wine; and could tell more stories about that one time when we took that trip. For us, happening to find that half-sister on the first day of Criminal Law has made practice bearable. If you haven't found yours (or half-brother) it's not too late. Connect with friends, take the trip, sample the grapes. ♦

Loretta Howieson Kallas graduated from the University of Wyoming College of Arts and Science in 1997 and the University of Wyoming College of Law in 2000. In September of 2001, she became an associate with Buchhammer and Kehl, P.C., in Cheyenne, where she primarily focused in insurance defense, family law and criminal defense. In October 2005, she was appointed as Assistant Federal Public Defender for the District of Wyoming and in October of 2007, she began working as a Chief Trial Deputy County Attorney with the Uinta County Attorney's Office. She resigned that position in 2011 and opened Gerrard Law, later Vehar & Gerrard, until 2015. Elected in 2014, she has served as Uinta County and Prosecuting Attorney since January 5, 2015.



M. Jalie Meinecke graduated from Cody High School in 1992, the UW College of Business in 1997 and UW College of Law in 2000. She began her career at Simonton Law Firm in August 2000 and remained there until she began a partnership with Alex H Sitz, III in 2005. She has



remained a partner at Meinecke & Sitz, LLC ever since. She currently lives in Sheridan and practices in Cody. She has a civil practice focusing on litigation, real estate contracts, probates and estate planning, water rights and other civil disputes. She has been married to her husband, Greg, for 29 years and they have five children ranging in age from 28 to 10 years old. They enjoy the outdoors with their children, hunting, fishing and camping. They also enjoy traveling as a family and will go to the Florida Keys over the holidays as a group, and will take a trip to New Zealand in the spring just the two of them to celebrate their 30th anniversary.