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This Woman's Work

Secretary of State Alison Lundergan Grimes Goes to Frankfort

by Rachel Horn Photos by Rideout Photography

I am not a pundit nor will I be contributing to Politico anytime soon, so this feature will be void of most political jargon and commentary. We wanted a behind-the-title look at Kentucky's sitting Secretary of State. So put on your bi-partisan derby hat and meet Alison Lundergan Grimes.

In a family of five daughters, all bearing names beginning with A, it is easy to imagine that Kentucky's Secretary of State would have grown up being mostly referred to as "Hey you." That is definitely not the case these days for Grimes.

As the middle of the five daughters, Grimes assured that even though

most people's reaction to her estrogen-rich family was pity for her father, "It was really my poor mother," she said. "She heard everything, but she raised us to

really know that women matter. Women count, women aren't just to be seen, but to be heard."

The path to adding "Secretary of State" to the front of her name was far from shocking for Grimes. It was a clear cut, born-to-do-this kind of story. Grime's father, Jerry Lundergan, served in the General Assembly for many years as state representative of Kentucky's 76th district, which meant that Alison and her sisters experienced childhood much differently than most.

As children, most of us went door to door only for Halloween or to peddle Girl Scout cookies. Alison, however, went door to door as a youngster bravely introducing herself and attempting to generate voter interest and acting as a campaign spokesperson for her father. She and her sisters

rode around in an RV in the 76th district, learned how to read precinct lists, and even gave people rides to the polls on Election Day once they were licensed drivers.

Grimes spoke very fondly and appreciatively of her parents, "When we were younger, [they] really instilled in each of my sisters the notion that citizenship is a responsibility and that you have to make sure to have your voice heard," said Grimes, a Mason County native.

Although Grimes seemed to be bred for public office, she grew up receiving stethoscopes and well wishes on her future career in medicine. It wasn't until after attending a program

at Brown University dubbed, "So You Think You Want to Be a Doctor?" – passing out during a 7-minute carpal tunnel surgery – and having a trusted

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chemistry professor tell her to take her talents out of the chem lab and into the political science arena, that she decided to start the path that won her the 2011 election.

After graduating from Rhodes College in Memphis, Tenn., Grimes received her law degree from American University in Washington. It was there that law became her passion. "Being in a family of five girls, you knew what the boundaries were. There were rules, there were guidelines, and that is probably why I took a liking to the law."

Grimes has practiced law in Lexington for seven years now with a focus on business litigation. In the last few years, she reached a point where she could either get in line for the partnership track and corner office, or go in a different direction. Her light bulb moment came after she won a







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"YE OLD ALISON, WHEREVER YOU RAMBLE, WHEREVER YOU GO, KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE DONUT AND NOT ON ITS HOLE."

domestic violence case for a single mother in Fayette County. The case didn't win Grimes or her firm a lot of recognition or money, but the mother's genuine gratitude and emotion after winning made the biggest impact on Grimes. She knew she could do a lot more outside of her office walls, so she set her sights on a new gig in Frankfort.

"Ye old Alison, wherever you ramble, wherever you go, keep your eye on the donut and not on its hole." This was a blessing given to Grimes by a gentleman in Somerset early on in her campaign. She held on to it tightly during the election and still does to this day. Keep your eye on the big picture, don't sweat the small stuff.

With the help of her family, (her adorable grandmothers becoming overnight campaign ad stars) and having the chance to meet some of Kentucky's finest citizens, Grimes went on to win the election. Not only win, but have more votes than anyone on the ticket. Governor included.

These days, Grimes is working hard in Frankfort to propel a climate that creates jobs and faster growth in our state. She has also been a major player in the nation for advocating a more secure and streamlined voting process for the military servicemen and women overseas. She made a trip to the Middle East this past September to see the voting process firsthand, and was able to obtain support from the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate on the issue of military voting. They were made Senate Bill 1 in the next legislative session.

At the end of the day, family is what recharges Grimes to keep on keeping on for Kentucky. When she heads home in the evenings, she switches her phone to vibrate and enjoys her time with her husband Andrew and their Bernese Mountain dog, Nala. She always finds time to work out, shares a joint passion for historic preservation and antiques with Andrew, and was given the task to keep her late grandmother's chocolate fudge recipe going for the family.

On the future, Grimes says as long as she is open to change, is willing to stick her neck out and take chances, all while smiling – she will be at this. "In what form or fashion, I am not sure. It's not the titles that matter to me; it's the difference we are making." 🇺🇸



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