

Coleman

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said put a lot of strain on married couples around them. Couples broke up because of the strain of poverty and academic rigor. The Colemans made it.

"It was very stressful," Mrs. Coleman recalled. But she looked at it as an extension of college years and found creative ways to make what little money they had stretch. "The only thing that strained us was not having time together."

In 1971, he made the transition from teaching theater as a graduate student to teaching English in a department that lacked emphasis on African-American literature. He was breaking ground, and the work was time consuming.

"She's always been in my corner, no matter what has happened," Dr. Coleman said.

After the boys grew up a bit, it was Dr. Coleman's turn to support Mrs. Coleman as she started a career. She wanted to further her education and contribute to the family income, so she enrolled in the education department's licensure program.

Throughout her career, she had problems with administrations and complaining parents because of her disciplinary philosophy. She said Dr. Coleman always listened to her, though they never discussed other teachers in front of the children.

The fact that they were both educators is something Mrs. Coleman said she believes helped them stay perpetually strong as a couple.

"It's not a cushy job," she said. "If you take it seriously, it's a hard job ... Had I not had the same passion for education, that could have made a clash."

To supplement their income, and to provide an escape, the two often performed musically together. Sometimes Mrs. Coleman sang in the Ed Coleman Trio, and other times, they had gigs at weddings or other engagements.

When their sons became old enough, they all performed as a family.

At weddings, they would often make bets on how long they thought the marriage would last.

"We've lost a lot of bets because it didn't last as long as we thought it would," Dr. Coleman said, laughing a little.

Because they share so many songs, they don't have a "song," but they do enjoy singing "My Funny Valentine" to each other.

After 39 years, to keep romance and fun in their relationship, the Colemans still date. And because both boys are now married men, the Colemans have more time to take care of themselves. They also share a glass of wine every night.

"We have our differences, but I can still look at him, and it pulls me back into our relationship," Mrs. Coleman said. "I'm very proud of him and how much he has made of himself. He teaches us more and more every day."

Dr. Coleman said friends often joke around with him and ask things such as, "How did you get a woman like that?" He just tells them, "I waited long enough."

"She's still a good date."

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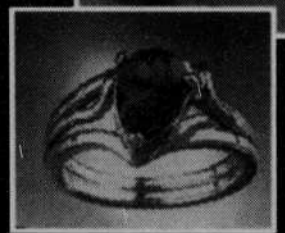
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