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### “The Best Marriage I Know”

People get married for many reasons, and at least 40% of all marriages end in divorce. Ending a marriage is just as easy as starting one in today’s society. Not everyone takes the promise of “for better or worse, for richer or poorer, through sickness and health ‘til death do us part” to heart. I know two people that not only understand the seriousness of marriage then, but they also work every day to overcome being another statistic.

December 16, 2009 will be a special day for my mom and dad. They will celebrate their sixteenth anniversary. When my mom and dad got married on December 16, 1992, most people they knew told them that they were making a mistake. Most said they wouldn’t make it the first year. Only a handful of people stood by them and supported them. No, my mom wasn’t pregnant and “having to get married.” My mom was twenty-four and just out of college. My dad was twenty-two and had completed two years. The reason most people thought they were making a mistake was because my mom is white, and my dad is African-American.

They lived in the South during a time when racial marriages were still on the books as not being legal in Alabama. They were getting married in the South in a time period when many people did not accept interracial marriages. In 1901, Alabama created a law that banned these marriages. Although people were not prosecuted after the Supreme Court ruled this law unconstitutional, the marriages were still technically illegal. My mom and dad had been married almost five years before Alabama citizens voted in 2000 to remove the Alabama law that banished interracial marriages, and then it only passed 52% to 48%. Alabama definitely was not ready to open its arms to interracial marriages. They started their marriage facing obstacles most couples do not have to face just because they loved each other. No one expected them to survive the first year of marriage much less sixteen years.

Luckily, my mom and dad took their marriage vows seriously. Life has not been easy. In 1993, my mom was turned down for a job because she was married to my dad. Seems the principal doing the hiring didn’t think “my mom’s personal life was beneficial to the students,” although she had graduated with honors from Auburn University. People made comments about them when they would go places. Her parents disowned her in the beginning. My dad was trying to finish his degree. He worked temporary jobs. They told me and my brother about not having any money to exchange Christmas gifts their first year of marriage. They even had to live with his parents when they first married because they couldn’t afford their own place. These types of stresses would be enough to end any marriage, but they worked hard to make their marriage even stronger.

Now, my mom is a teacher and my dad is a principal. They are not only good role models for me and my nine-year-old brother, but also for all the students they are around. Students see them together everywhere they go. Students see them at church and at ballgames. Students see them eating lunch daily and working in our school system to create a positive environment. Students see that married couples can be happy and enjoy building a life together. My brother and I see how they take care of each other, support each other, and even argue with each other but never go to bed mad at each other. They never leave each other's company without a peck on the cheek or hang up the phone without saying, "I love you." They act more like newlyweds instead of an "old married couple."

My parents have made a lot of sacrifices over the last twenty years that they have been together. They just recently built their first home. Until two years ago, they lived in a small mobile home. They drove older cars and did without the newest technological gadgets. Their lives have never been easy nor ones of luxury, but none of that matters. All that seems to matter is that they have each other's love. They have worked hard to create a home with two loving parents for me and my brother. Everything they do, they do for each other and for us to make our lives better. I can't think of any better way to honor their sixteenth wedding anniversary than by telling everyone that they definitely have the "best marriage that I know."