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LIFESTYLES

N.J. author proves her Mama does know best

By Catherine Crocker
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

When Chrisena Coleman was pregnant with son Jordan, she received lots of homespun advice.

Don't drink coffee.
Don't pick at ugly people.
Don't sleep on your stomach or the baby will have flat nose.
And most important, don't eat strawberries or red sauce.

"My aunt, who is a caterer, told me it would give the baby red patches," Coleman said. "I just couldn't stop eating read sauces."

Coleman was so fascinated by what she was told that she gathered them into "Mama Knows Best: African American Wives Tales, Myths and Remedies for Mothers and Mothers-to-be."

A reporter for the New York Daily News, Coleman was surprised by scope of what she was told.

A lot of it actually coincided with things her doctor told her.

"During my pregnancy, the doctor would give me a medical, clinical reason for something," Coleman said. "My mother, aunts and friends would come back with the same warning, but it would be based in myth."

Coleman began to ask around and found lots of women had been told the same things. Initially, she was going to write an article, but her agent thought it would make a great book.

In less than 15 days, she had a book deal.

"I think it was God," she said. "It just came to me."

What came to her is one of the funniest, sweetest books out there.

A real southern classic written by a woman from New Jersey.

She does have southern roots, however.

Her mom, Dorothy, is from Macon, Ga. Her father, Wilbert is from Columbia, S.C.

She even has ties to Charlotte. Her father spent time at Johnson C. Smith University.

An eclectic mix of Coleman's experiences as a first-time mom and the wit and wisdom of the black ages, "Mama Knows Best" is well worth a read.

Organized into topical chapters that range from pregnancy to colic the book provides helpful and some not so helpful tips that run from the medicinal use of "pot liquor," the juice of greens, to cure constipation and a urine-soaked diaper to cure blotchy skin to the dangers of mixing kerosene, asafetida and liquid to cure colic (believe it or not it has been done. Don't try it, she advises.)

What worked for her:

Wiping his face with a urine-soaked diaper did ensure a smooth complexion. (I saw Jordan — perfect pecan-colored skin.)

What didn't work?

Onyx jewelry.
A friend told Coleman if she took a piece of onyx jewelry with her into delivery, it would be quicker and less painful.

"Nope," she said. "Castor oil, which they said would bring on a quick labor, didn't work either. I suffered."

How does she feel about wives' tales now?

"I'm not as pessimistic as before," she said. "I really believe there is some truth to it. We really do need to take heed and listen."

Oh yeah, the myth about red sauces and strawberries does have some validity.

"Jordan was born with a red patch at the nape of his neck," she said, sheepishly. "I have to admit, it appears to be true."

A mother's love

Watt's mom shares secret of parenting successfully

By Jeri Young
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Mementos of three sons crowd Evelyn Herron's Dixie community home.

Art from a 1995 trip to Africa with youngest son, U.S. Rep. Mel Watt.

Pictures of oldest son Graham, an administrator at St. Augustine's College in Raleigh sit atop her organ.

Advertisements for middle son Rudy's contracting company are displayed in a calendar on a table.

Across the street, the home where she raised her sons sits. Now fully modernized, the Watt boys spent most of their childhood in the small house without indoor plumbing and electricity.

"It didn't look that good when we lived there," she said with a laugh.

From those humble beginnings, Herron's boys became productive men.

"I never thought they would turn out like this," Herron said quietly. "Every mother thinks their children are special. But who would have ever thought it would end up like this."

A single parent who dropped out of school in the ninth grade to marry, Herron raised her sons under adverse conditions.

"When I look back over it, I have to say it was hard," she said. "But back then I was young and of course you just do what you have to do."

An eternal optimist, Herron always taught her sons to believe the sky was the limit.

"I didn't have a lot of education," she said. "But I stayed behind my boys in school. I was strict with them. I didn't have any problems with them."

Lean years

Herron's odyssey began in the '40s. She left school in ninth grade to marry Graham Watt. By the 1945, she was the mother of three. By 1950, her husband had left leaving her to raise her boys alone.

Her first job after her husband left was in a school cafeteria, where she earned \$15 a week.

"It wasn't that bad," Herron said with a laugh. "I could take \$17 and buy enough groceries to last a long time. Plus my brother worked at wholesale place. He would bring us slightly damaged stuff that kept the cabinets pretty full."

Herron also received aid from her husband, who was ordered to pay \$25 a week.

"He did all right for a while," she said. "But then he started to skip weeks and months. I knew then that I would have to provide for my boys myself," she said.

And she did.

A strict disciplinarian, Herron made sure her sons did well in school. Her struggles to get jobs that paid enough to care for her family made her value education even more.

"They used to complain that I believed the teacher over them," she said. "I knew my boys, and I knew what they would and would not do. I wanted them to know if they did wrong, they would get in trouble."

Herron said she had only a few problems.

"Graham and Melvin used to fight all the



PHOTO/LEE STEWART

Evelyn Herron works in her flower beds. The retired postal worker and mother of U.S. Representative Mel Watt, spends her spare time gardening and sewing.

time," she said. "Graham used to tease him so. Rudy was always the referee."

But she says, they were good boys. "The didn't give me many problems," she said. "We lived out in the country. Wasn't too much they could get into. There weren't any drugs or anything."

They did well in school. Graham and Melvin were always at the top of their class.

"Rudy liked to work with his hands," Herron said. "He did well in school, too."

Herron also took time to play with her sons.

"I'd come home from work and go out to that field and play baseball with the boys," she said. "I'd get there and hit and run. I had about as much energy as they did. As they were growing up, I was too."

Things improved dramatically by the time Mel went to college. By the '60s, Herron had a job at the Post Office as a mail sorter.

"I know every little town in North Carolina," she said. "We had to sort 60 letters a minute. I was lucky. Each job was better than the last. I was making more and more money and things started to look up."

But Herron still couldn't afford to send them all to college.

"Rudy and Graham went to the military," she said. "Melvin always wanted to go to college at (UNC) Chapel Hill. I told them I would help where I could, but he'd need to work."

Graham worked his way through college after his military stint, eventually earning a Ph.D.

Mel worked during the summer mowing grass and working odd jobs. He saved \$25 a week and Herron added what she could.

"Melvin was blessed," she said. "There always seemed to be windows opening for him."

Mel mowed the lawn of the childhood minister of William Friday, then chancellor of UNC-Chapel Hill. The minister offered to write a letter on Mel's behalf.

"That really helped," Herron said. "I couldn't have done it by myself. I learned then that it helped to know the right people. I finally knew some of them."

Herron is an active member of Mount Olive Presbyterian Church where she's a Sunday school teacher and moderator of the missionary society.

"I guess I'm pretty good for what I've been through," she said. "Now, there just aren't hours in the day to do what I need to do."

Looking for a gift for the perfect gift for Mom?

By Ben Dobbin
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ROCHESTER, N.Y. — Give birth on Mother's Day, get a free camera!

In the tradition of George Eastman, a marketing maestro who in 1930 handed out 500,000 Brownie cameras to children turning 12 that year, Eastman Kodak Co. is gearing up for another family-friendly giveaway.

Judging by birth records and past mothers-on-Mother's Day promotions, the timely recipients on May 11 could number a n y -

w h e r e
f r o m
3,000 to
10,000.

D o e s
t h i s
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Back in 1930, the man who made photography accessible to the masses was celebrating his world-conquering company's 50th anniversary. Today, Kodak has big Japanese rivals like Fuji to worry about, and needs to nudge slow early sales of its new generation of Advanced Photo System cameras and film.

"Kodak is desperate right now to stem some market share losses of film sales they've been having to Fuji and to accelerate the acceptance of the Advanced Photo System," said B. Alex Henderson, a Wall Street analyst.

The giveaway model to new mothers across the United States is the Kodak Advantix 3200AF, which retails for \$119.

It incorporates the usual ease-of-use Advanced Photo System features such as drop-in film loading and three print-size options, plus a flip-up flash and a design that minimizes "red eye."

"That's real important when you're taking pictures of newborns, whose pupils tend to be very dilated, and when people love to get in close," said Mike Snyder, marketing communications manager of Advantix-brand cameras.

And make no mistake, he said, parents of young children are among the most "photographically active" folks and Mother's Day kicks off the busiest picture-taking time of year.

As in, give them razors and they'll soon be rushing out to buy blades.

To qualify:

Mother's Day mothers must send in a photocopy of the birth certificate and a snapshot of the child by Aug. 31 to Kodak Advantix Cameras Picture Perfect Mother's Day, P.O. Box 7397, Young America, Minn. 55573-7397.

Mothers of quadruplets note: Just one camera per family.

Designed by the world's largest photo companies — Kodak, Canon, Fuji, Minolta and Nikon — the new photo system was launched last April.

However, early production snags and a decision by the Japanese makers to focus on domestic markets created a shortfall in the United States that Kodak couldn't fill.

While it took orders for well over 2 million cameras, it sold fewer than 2 million.

Last week, Kodak rolled out new television and print advertising, renewing a global marketing blitz that, at an estimated cost of \$100 million, will be its costliest ever for a new product.

Robinson wins Mother's Day honor

By Catherine Crocker
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Baseball Hall-of-Famer Jackie Robinson's widow Rachel is one of six women selected Outstanding Mothers of 1997.

Libby Pataki and Faye Wattleton were among the other winners chosen by the National Mother's Day Committee of the non-profit Father and Mother's Day Council.

The honorees donned red-rose corsages, posed for photographs and dutifully answered questions about the stresses and rewards of balancing home and career.

But it wasn't until the mothers started talking about their kids that things really got rolling, and the smiles — the real-from-the-heart kind, not the camera-

ready kind — started lighting up their faces

Robinson, the founder and chairwoman of the Jackie Robinson Foundation, broke the ice at the pre-awards luncheon news conference when she introduced her daughter, Sharon, a nurse and adjunct professor at Yale University's School of Nursing.

"The joy of my life," she said, as her daughter walked up to the podium.

Later, she recalled how tough it was raising three young children — two boys and a girl — while her husband, the first black player in the major leagues, was on the road.

"You have to be a good manager," Robinson said.

On Tuesday night, Robinson

was joined by President Clinton at a Shea Stadium ceremony marking the 50th anniversary of her husband's first major league game with the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Bernadette Castro, the state parks commissioner and another honoree, introduced her daughter, Terri, 29, a former prosecutor who currently runs the family's convertible-sofa business.

"She's a fighter," said Castro, whose daughter suffers from arthritis. She also has three sons.

Carol Browner, the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, called her 9-year-old son Zachary, who plays baseball, the saxophone and the piano, "the most important thing I have ever done."

Wattleton, the president of the

Center for Gender Equality, said, "There's no one in the world" she enjoys being with more than her daughter Felicia, 21, a history and literature major at Harvard University.

Pataki, the mother of Emily, 17, Teddy 14, Allison, 11, and Owen, 8, said her challenge as a mother is balancing her public and private lives.

"You have on the one hand a very public life from which you would obviously like to shield your children as much as possible," she said. "And, on the other hand, you have an extremely private life which is of enormous interest to your public out there."

Andrea Jung, a top executive at Avon Products Inc., was also honored.