

Couple juggles schoolwork with marital vows

Til death do them part

By Steve Smith
Senior Reporter

When Chad and Carrie Collett arrived at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln a few years ago, they had been dating each other for less than a year.

Three years later, their courtship culminated with a June wedding.

Chad, a junior Spanish and political science major, and Carrie, an undeclared freshman, now live in a modest apartment at 18th and Knox streets.

Not surprisingly, the Colletts admit some adjustments were needed during the first few months of their marriage.

"The biggest change is that the center of interest goes from 'me' to 'we,'" Chad said. "That's what's most important."

"Typical college kids my age are busy thinking about what's best for them. It changes your whole pattern of thinking."

Carrie smiled. "We were 'we' before we got married, though. We've been 'we' for a long time, I think."

The more things change, the more they stay the same. Aside from things on the surface, Chad said their relationship hadn't changed that much.

"The major difference is those pretty pictures up there," he said, motioning toward the couple's wedding photos above the fireplace. "That, and we got a heck of a good loan and some dandy gifts at the wedding."

Neither student thought they'd find a reason to get married at their age.

"No way," Carrie said. "I didn't think I'd get married for quite a while. For a couple months after the wedding, I was still signing my checks Carrie Masek."

"Yeah," Chad added, "I didn't think I'd ever get married. I was too self-centered ... but we decided we were tired of the whole dating thing. We wanted to settle down."

"But I still feel weird introducing her as my wife when we go out."

If they go out, home entertainment is usually the ticket when the Colletts find time for recreation. Funds, or the lack thereof, influence their activities most.

"Man, I've still got that tuition bill to pay," Chad said.

"We don't have a lot of money to go to the movies a lot of the time," Chad said. "Sometimes, we'll go out to eat, rent movies — whatever. Usually, it's something to do at home."

Valuable time to spend together isn't nearly as easy to find now that they are both torn between classes

and work.

In addition to carrying 12 hours of classes at UNL, Chad is an assistant manager at Gateway Shopping Center's Kay-Bee Toys. It's a job that sometimes requires more than 40 hours of work a week, he said.

Carrie also juggles the textbook and the timecard. She works full-time at Centurion, a local cellular phone company.

But it's a lifestyle they both gladly accept.

"Beats being single," Chad said with a laugh. "That sucks."

Some may wonder why the Colletts tied the knot so early in their college careers — Chad still isn't old enough to drink legally — instead of waiting until after college.

But if they had not pooled their resources through marriage, college might not have been possible, Carrie said.

"If it wasn't for being married to Chad, I probably wouldn't be able to go to school," she said. "I started classes here for the first time in two years this semester."

Chad said he didn't feel he was missing out on anything by marrying young.

"I'm glad I'm married," he said. "I don't have to go out like some of the single guys on campus. They have to go out and look for

someone to be with, but I don't have to worry about that."

"Married life really makes me want to come home. Otherwise, home is really boring."

The Colletts are convinced their marriage will stand the test of time. Chad mentioned recent research that says two-thirds of young marriages eventually end in divorce.

"That doesn't bother me," he said. "I pissed away my high school years drinking and going out all night. I don't need that now."

It's two nights before Halloween. Chad sits on the living room couch, watching MTV's infamous "Beavis and Butt-Head." Carrie is getting ready to go to a costume party, dressed as a pig. She's going alone; Chad has to get up early the next day to go to work.

"It's not a big deal," Chad said. "Sometimes we do things by ourselves. I don't see that as a problem in our marriage at all."

"I think it's one of the benefits," Carrie said.

With keys in hand, she's ready to leave. They give each other a kiss and a hug.

"I love you, babe," Chad said. "I love you, too," Carrie replied.

"We were 'we' before we got married, though. We've been 'we' for a long time, I think."



Chad and Carrie Collett partake in a traditional honeymoon pose in the doorway of their apartment. The Colletts, who are both UNL students, have been married since June.

PHOTO BY DAMON LEE