

COURTING IN THE COURTROOM

D.C. Couple Smitten After Dip in Jury Pool

17 Years Later, They Join With Postal Service to Urge Others to 'Serve With Pride'

By KEITH L. ALEXANDER
Washington Post Staff Writer

It would be hard to find two bigger advocates for jury service than James and Maxine Moore.

They met 17 years ago while serving on a jury in D.C. Superior Court. They got to know each other in the middle of a medical malpractice case, later fell in love and have been together ever since.

The trial ended in a hung jury. But the Moores offer themselves as Exhibit A that something good can come out of jury service.

Yesterday, they returned to the courthouse to help unveil a new U.S. postage stamp depicting 12 multi-colored silhouettes and framed by the words, "Jury Duty" and "Serve With Pride." The Postal Service has printed 40 million of the 41-cent

stamps and began selling them nationwide yesterday.

The Moores joined court officials and Postal Service executives at the event and talked about how they struck up a relationship after a trial that went bust.

"I was just blessed," James Moore, 62, said. "It wasn't anything I was looking for or anything that I thought would happen."

Court officials say they hope the stamp generates more interest in jury duty in the District. Finding jurors has been challenging for years, despite efforts to widen the databases that are used, because so many addresses become out of date, people die and some scofflaws just don't answer the call. Only one in four of the jury notices sent out by the city yields a jury prospect, officials said.

The court learned of the Moores

in January. James Moore was part of a group of former jurors who participated in a rap session with judges and other court officials about the jury selection process. Moore told the judges that the best experience he had on jury duty was meeting his future wife.

That was a new one for Chief Judge Rufus G. King III, who has overseen the court since 2000.

"Maybe we can get the word out in the singles bars that this is a great place to meet ladies," King quipped, "and still fulfill your civic duty."

Finding a date during jury duty, let alone a potential spouse, is hardly the norm, according to Alexandria-based dating expert Janine Driver, who hosts classes throughout the country on Internet dating. Still, she said, it is "plausible" because of the environment.

"You're spending an intense amount of time together, during a very stressful situation, with people disagreeing, and tensions and emotions run high," Driver said. "It can be an awesome opportunity to meet someone."

When he was growing up in Alabama and then relocating to the District as a youth, James Moore said his mother taught him that jury duty was as important as voting, espe-

cially for blacks. He calls himself a "professional juror," having served on about 16 juries during the 50 years he has lived in the city.

His wife is less enthusiastic about the process. "I hate sitting around all day," she said. "But it's interesting watching how the judicial process works."

Maxine Moore — then Maxine Lee — wasn't looking for a relationship when she wound up on the malpractice case years ago. She arrived for jury duty carrying one of her favorite mystery novels, figuring she would spend the day reading before being excused for the afternoon.

She was called to a courtroom, where she sat next to Moore, while lawyers screened potential jurors for the civil trial. During breaks, Moore kept the jury candidates entertained. Maxine never got to her book.

"He was a jokester," she recalled. "Sometimes jury duty can get boring. He just kept us laughing."

"I was just being my charming self," James Moore said with a thunderous laugh.

His wife rolled her eyes. "He talks to everyone. He just talks and talks," she said.

The trial and deliberations lasted four days, with one holdout causing the deadlock. Afterward, several ju-



BY SUSAN BIDDLE — THE WASHINGTON POST

At D.C. Superior Court, where Maxine and James Moore met while on jury duty, the couple helps unveil a stamp aimed at sparking jury duty interest.

rors, including the Moores, went to a restaurant for coffee.

James and Maxine later exchanged phone numbers and promised to stay in touch. They talked frequently over the phone, about their then-teenage kids, their former spouses and their aging parents.

At first, the two seemed total opposites. She was the introverted homebody from the quiet Fort Lincoln neighborhood. He was the chatty, jovial man from the rougher streets of Carver Terrace.

They went on their first date at Sir Walter Raleigh restaurant about five months after they met. More dates followed, to movies, plays and Hains Point. In November 1996, six years after they met, they married.

The couple started working at Metro within a year or so of the trial. She took a job in the rail division, and he joined the sales office. They live on a quiet block in Northeast Washington, just off Kenilworth Avenue. The living room is adorned with Bibles and dozens of pictures, many of which James Moore took as part of his photography hobby.

Even though jury duty changed his life, he said he doesn't encourage his single friends or family members to sign up for it with the goal of finding true love.

"It has more to do with personality than anything else," he said. "It just happened on jury duty. I was just being myself and I guess, hey, she liked it."