

'RHOA' Star Phaedra Parks Talks New Book and Marriage: "Remember What Made You Fall in Love"



By Kerri Sheehan

Phaedra Parks of Bravo's *The Real Housewives of Atlanta* is well acquainted with working hard and multitasking. There is seemingly nothing this mother of two can't tackle; she has a healthy relationship with her husband, and a booming law firm, The Parks Group, P.C. Parks began her association with *RHOA* as the show's lawyer, but this beautiful Belle quickly went from behind the scenes to in front of the camera, joining season three as a cast member. "Now, I can say I've pretty much done everything when it comes to TV – from the licensing deals to being the on-air talent," says the starlet.

Never one to slow down, Parks is also venturing into the funeral business, working towards her mortician's license and opening up her own family-run funeral home. When asked how she got into the business, it's really a sad story. "Unfortunately, I got into this industry because I had a lot of great friends who passed. People would ask me to help with the funeral arrangements, and I actually became very intrigued by every aspect of the mortuary process – from picking out the makeup and dressing the body to the funeral service. I always paid a lot of attention to the preparation and all of the details." Family is a motivating factor in everything Parks does, and by opening a funeral home and crematorium in the near future, she hopes to leave a legacy for her family. "It's a very multi-dimensional industry: You've got the business portion, you've got the counseling portion, and then you've got the preparation of the body portion."

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Throughout her somewhat unusual change of direction in career, husband Apollo has been very supportive. "I think communication is key in any marriage," she candidly shares. "You need to clearly communicate how you're going to achieve your goals and how your partner will be a part of your plan." For women looking to make a similar track change in their career, Parks suggests making sure your spouse knows that they're a significant ingredient in your success. This high-powered business woman knows that it's not good practice to plunge into the unknown while dragging your hubby by the collar – having him as an equal and understanding partner in the new undertaking will help smooth any obstacles that may pop up during the career transition.

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Given her multifaceted career path, she prides herself on

being an undeniable woman of southern charm and distinction. In her new book, *Secrets of the Southern Belle: How to Be Nice, Work Hard, Look Pretty, Have Fun, and Never Have an Off Moment*, she gives readers an updated version of social etiquette that mixes modern living with traditional morals. “I think some of the books out there are too traditional, so I put a spin on it with texting, social networking, and other things like that.”

From growing one’s social circle, to strengthening one’s professional life, Parks knows from experience that a little bit of etiquette goes a long way in any situation. Parks’ mantra is “style is void without substance,” and this sentiment echoes throughout her book as she teaches you that you don’t have to be from the South to be a Southern Belle. “A Belle is anyone who’s charming and graceful, who exhibits poise, and who appropriately maneuvers social settings,” she explains, “You can put on stylish clothes, but if you’re not wearing confidence, integrity, and class, then your outfit doesn’t really matter.”

A real Southern Belle herself, Parks believes little grace should be applied to every situation at hand. “Even if you feel very strongly about something, it may be best to revisit the conversation privately rather than publicly – you may be humiliating someone, which you never want to do,” the author shares. “Being nice and killing people with kindness has definitely been my weapon of choice throughout my career.”

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Of course, life is about more than just your job; Parks strongly believes that her most precious time is spent with her family. As a mother of two young boys, she credits prioritizing as the key to juggling it all. Her biggest tip for other women is to take care of yourself first, and everything else will follow. “If you’re at your best self, then you’ll give your best. It’s easier said than done – trust

me!” Taking moments to focus on yourself among all of the chaos of life will help maintain your identity as a woman. She says that the old saying is true: “Happy wife, happy life!”

This strong woman has known her husband since 1995, and the two have been married for four years. Because they have a long history she says, “We can sort of anticipate what the other one is going to do, whether it’s good or bad, and we try to adjust our actions accordingly.” The reality starlet adds, “communicating, compromising, and negotiating keeps our marriage strong.” For women struggling in their relationship, Parks shares this piece of advice: “Remember what made you fall in love with that person and know that no marriage is going to be perfect everyday. You have to realize which battles are worth fighting, which ones need to be negotiated, and which ones you allow your partner to control.” Parks knows that when you’re going to be with someone forever, you’re not always gong to be on the same page, and that’s okay.

Be sure to check out ‘Secrets of a Southern Belle,’ available on Amazon, and catch more of glamorous and successful Phaedra Parks on Bravo’s ‘The Real Housewives of Atlanta’ on Sundays at 8/7c. You can also connect with her on Twitter or her website.

**Sidebar photo courtesy of Anderson Group PR.*