

Business, Babies and Bets

Extracts

As the business expanded we bought another truck. Collie and I shared a philosophy to give disadvantaged people a go whenever possible, and we employed Eric Rutherford, an older bloke from our street who was struggling to find work. Over the years we employed two deaf and mute pressers, one a likeable young bloke, Kevin, and the other, an amiable, hard-working older man, Les. Bill had Bells Palsy and Sandy was a transvestite. We later also employed her male partner, Glen. The occasionally fractious Fred was one of our best, and longest serving, pressers. A wonderful, colourful collection of warm, hard-working, dedicated people; a little battered from coping with some of life's more unusual obstacles, but good-humoured and highly productive. Over the years there were many others, just as colourful.

Ted Laver was an older man, who lived on his own, and who appreciated the human contact and the financial independence that working with us gave him. He was very reliable. When he didn't arrive at work one morning, and wasn't answering his phone, I feared the worst. I dashed over ...



As our staff increased, and our horizons broadened, Collie started to split his time between the factory and the road. We were always under time pressure and often had to bypass some of the rules of the road when we thought it was safe to do so. Double-parking when delivering to fashion shops in Double Bay was my usual offence, and occasionally shooting across a double line, when the road was clear of other traffic. Collie was delivering to a customer in a block of flats in Bellevue Road, and crossed the double line as a short-cut to the property. As he completed the manoeuvre he caught sight of a police car rounding the bend in the other direction. He ducked into an open garage on the property, quickly grabbed the dry cleaning and pulled down the garage door behind him, while he made the delivery. A close call! As he rounded the corner of the building on his way back to his vehicle ...



Audette launched into her new career as a mother with the same dedication and sense of responsibility that she has always brought to every aspect of her life. Armed with a list of rules influenced, if not created, by her parents, she was determined that Bruce, and any future children, would have the perfect upbringing.

Rule one: no dummies. *Rule two:* no toys in the cot at night because night time was for sleeping, not playing. *Rule three:* blackmail is just as unacceptable at two months as at 22 years. If they start crying, check that they are okay and then shut the door and let them cry for a while. If they continue to cry check them again; if they're okay shut the door and let them cry all night. They'll soon stop their crying. *Rule four:* no bottles. As soon as they stop breast feeding teach them to drink out of a cup. *Rule five:* start potty training at four weeks. Rup insisted that if you could house train a dog in a month you could potty train a child in six months. Consequently, all our children were placed on the pot at four weeks. As soon as they woke up, Audette gathered them out of their basinet and held them on the potty, their little bodies flopping forward, held steady only with their mother's strong but gentle hands. They soon knew what the potty was for. All three were out of nappies well before their first birthday. *Rule six:* ...



We didn't get much sleep in September or October. We had a new baby, what we considered was a massive debt of £2,500 and our only hope of releasing the financial pressure, a potentially lucrative wager on the Epsom-Metropolitan double. Our anxiety and excitement levels increased in equal measure when High Law won the important lead-in race, the Tramway Handicap on 13 September, my brother, Tommy's birthday, and Audette's favourite number. The planets appeared to be in alignment when High Law, having been given a very favourable weight of 7 stone 12 lbs, was allocated saddlecloth 13 and drew barrier 3. Audette was born on Friday, 13 April 1923 and consequently has always favoured the number 13. Though normally not a superstitious person, she was now certain High Law would win.

Saturday 4 October 1952 eventually arrived. As always, unless I was dropping into the racecourse on my way to play cricket, I was dressed in a suit and hat, as were most of the other men. Audette was dressed to the nines, as was also the custom of the time. She was radiant in a black dress, high-heeled shoes, gloves, coiffured hair, and a glamorous hat. All dolled up, we arrived in the truck, and looked forward to an afternoon standing, and hopefully cheering, amongst the masses. I felt sorry for Audette and all the other ladies as the rain came down. It bucketed down, which was very depressing. Hairdos and outfits might be ruined, or at least placed under considerable stress, but more important, even to Audette on this occasion, High Law wasn't a noted wet track runner.

Surprisingly, the great horse still started favourite at 5 to 1, in a very open race. Sydney hadn't seen a day like it in living memory. The rain was so heavy and so persistent that we expected Noah to drop by with his Ark, calling for two-by-two passengers. High Law jumped out in about tenth place in a field of 25 and kept that position to the home turn. Then Athol Mulley ...