

Josie Bissett: ***From Melrose to Motherhood***



The phone rang at precisely 1:30 p.m.

Whoever said actresses are tardy and temperamental never interviewed Josie Bissett. Aside from having perfect timing, the 30-year-old, Seattle-born actress is having the time of her life in her most demanding and cherished role yet: the love-struck, devoted mommy of 18-month-old Mason Tru Estes, her only child with husband, actor Rob Estes.

We know her best as Jane Mancini, the sweet, soft-spoken, overly trusting character she played on *Melrose Place* for its entire seven-year run. (And no, she isn't related to Jacqueline!) But for the moment, this fair-skinned beauty has traded in bright lights and fame for play dates and story

time. Hollywood can wait. After all, Mason has some growing up to do, and Bissett wants to be there for every moment of it.

Since Mason was born, Bissett has devoted herself 110% to being a mom. No big surprise, since according to Bissett, once she sets her mind to something, there's just no stopping her. It's this single-minded determination that brought her to Hollywood at the age of 17 and landed her a spot on Melrose Place a mere two years later.

And it's this same drive to be the best mother she can be that gave birth to her literary brainchild, "Little Bits of Wisdom," a compilation of parenting tips from people all over the world who are experiencing the mutual joys and frustrations of child rearing, released for sale last month. Parents can flip through its colorful, lively pages for such practical and heartfelt advice as: Use baby powder to remove wet sand, pain-free, from a child's body; and, take 15 minutes out of every day to cuddle your children and listen to them, the laundry can wait.

There's truly nothing like motherhood to forge a bond between women. And although I wasn't sure what Bissett was doing on the other end of the phone during our interview – changing a diaper or striking a pose as the official spokesperson for Neutrogena Cosmetics – this model mother took some time out of her busy life to talk to me about her book, being a new mom and life with handsome husband, Rob. (Is she lucky or what, Ladies?)

Q: So, how do you like being a mom? Is it your best role yet?

A: It is undoubtedly my best role yet! The rewards of motherhood far outweigh any acting job.

Q: What do you like most about it?

A: I love getting to witness all the milestones, and I especially like that my priorities are crystal-clear.

Q: Speaking of milestones, it's difficult not to compare your child with other kids when it comes to walking or potty training. Do you find yourself doing that with Mason?

A: I try not to, but you're right, it does happen. I really do my best to remember that every child is different and they all get to the same place eventually.

Q: I wish I had a stand-in when I was changing diapers. What is your biggest challenge as a mom?

A: I'm with you on the diaper changing! Mason absolutely hates it! I start to sweat when I know it's time. I think what I'm constantly working on, though, is to not have any expectations. I've learned that if I don't expect Mason to eat, or to get his diaper changed, or to behave any certain way, then I won't get disappointed when it doesn't happen the way I expected it to. It's a good philosophy on life, too!

Q: Do you think Hollywood moms have it easier than mainstream moms?

A: I think what's difficult for Hollywood moms is the lack of privacy, the traveling and the inconsistent schedule. What's easier is that we have the financial resources to hire the help we need. But I think all mothers, whether they be Hollywood moms, high-powered corporate executives or stay-at-home moms, all feel the same love for their child, and have the same issues and concerns. I think we are all trying to maintain a healthy balance of finding time for our children, our husbands, our work and ourselves.

Q: Mother's Day is coming up. Any special plans?

A: Well, Rob will be in Australia On Mother's Day, and I'm going to be doing press for the book. But right afterward, Mason and I are going to meet him in Australia.

Q: Wow, you're brave. That's a long trip with a child that small.

A: Oooh, yeah, I'm a little nervous about the flight. I've never gone that far with Mason. But from what I hear, I should fly at night and get a bulkhead seat with the little baby beds that fold down. So that's what I'm going to do.

Q: There's so much to worry about as a mom. What is your biggest fear?

A: That I can't protect him from everything. Like when he's older and at school, there could be a wild man shooting around and what can I do? That's a scary feeling because the depth of love you feel for your child is so overwhelming and you don't have control over everything that happens to him.

Q: It must really kill you then when you're out of town on assignment and have to leave Mason behind.

A: Actually, the longest I've been away from Mason is one night.

Q: And how was that?

A: It was great! I thought it would be really hard and I would miss him, but he was with Grandma – Rob's mom, who lives in town, and I had a blast! It was good for me to do.

Q: Do you take much time for yourself, besides escaping somewhere to do interviews?

A: Oh yeah, I do. I try to work out or go shopping. I definitely haven't stopped my life completely. I've always loved time alone, so I really try to honor that still.

Q: Being a mom puts me in touch with some very deep emotions sometimes. Has motherhood helped you become a better actress in a similar way?

A: Motherhood has helped me become a better PERSON! I think that motherhood wakes you up in a way. Knowing that Rob and I are Mason's

ultimate role models, we're constantly in check with ourselves to help him become an honest, kind and confident person. Children are very much our teachers as we are theirs. I haven't taken any acting jobs since becoming a mother, but having a child has definitely changed me, so I think it would affect my acting in a positive way!

Q: Let's talk about your book, Little Bits of Wisdom, a collection of tips and advice from real parents. What inspired you to write it?

A: When Mason was six weeks old, I joined my first Mommy and Me group, and it was the best support system I could have ever imagined. If you don't have a lot of parent friends, it's hard to know if you're doing things right. I realized the value of sharing our parenting experience. We all have so much to give to one another, and that's what this book is all about – parents giving to parents.



Q: Where did you find your tips and stories for the book?

A: I participated in live chats on parenting-related web sites. I asked people to write in with their favorite parenting tip.

Q: How was the response?

A: I received thousands! In fact, the hardest part of doing this book was that I could only choose so many. I was amazed at how each and every piece of advice that came in was unique in its own way. I wish I could have put them all in!

Q: What is your favorite bit of wisdom from the book?

A: I thought this was so clever . . . Freeze a few of those little catsup or mustard packages that come with fast food. The next time your little one gets a bump or bruise, have him hold one of those frozen packages on the wound. It's so much easier than a messy towel full of ice cubes, and the packages are just the right size for little hands to hold.

Q: Do you have any more books in the works?

A: The next book I'll be working on is a recipe book for kids. Every parent I know struggles with not only what to feed their children, but how to get them to eat.

Q: I could use that book right now! Dinnertime at my house is known as The Dinner Wars.

A: I hear that a lot. In fact, parents can send me their favorite recipes or best advice on getting kids to eat at www.littlebitsofwisdom.com.

Q: Okay, I can't end this interview without asking the question that's on the mind of every woman reading this article . . .

A: (Laughs, while finishing my thought) . . .what's it like to be married to Rob Estes?

Q: Exactly! How does it feel to be married to such a hunk, for lack of a more perfect word?

A: I don't think of him as a hunk. I mean, he's a gorgeous guy, but he's so much more than that.

Q: Well, to us women, he's a hunk! Sorry, I'm forgetting this is a family magazine.

A: (Laughs) Yeah. And the funny thing about Rob is that he has no idea how attractive he is, and that's what's so cute.

Q: You're kidding, right?

A: Really, he's an incredible husband and an incredible dad. We really work hard at our relationship to make it the best that it can be. And it's work. It takes effort and a calendar to keep your marriage successful. When you have kids, you have to be able to juggle it all.

Q: How did you guys meet?

A: We met at an audition for a TV movie. It was pretty obvious that we saw something in each other right away. We've been married eight years and dated two years before we got married.

Q: Eight years? Your background information says you got married in May 1992.

A: Would that be nine years? Oh, my gosh . . .

Q: I'm glad I could help you remember your anniversary.

A: Me too!

Q: Besides the Neutrogena commercials, will we be seeing you in another TV series or movie anytime soon?

A: I really want to focus on being a mom right now, and the book I'm doing. I'm still keeping the doors open to acting, though. If something really special comes along, that will work for me and Mason, then I'm open to it. But I will never take an acting job that won't allow me to be the one raising Mason.

Lynn Armitage is a freelance writer in Orange County and mother of two girls, who teach her bits of wisdom every day, whether she likes it or not.