

REVEL-ATION #2

by Marcy Waldie

4 March 1995

APA V #17

In May of 1986, Ray, my sister Penne, her husband Don and I decided to move together from Wisconsin to Las Vegas. We no longer had any close family in the area and were ready for a change. Don was burned out after 23 years of teaching as I was after 15. Ray was tired of commuting 80 miles a day, and Penne was always ready for some excitement. Soon after our arrival, we dabbled in various jobs, this being a respite from our careers.

Penne, Don and I ended up at (don't laugh) at a Chevron station/c-store. The business was just starting and, fortunately, the location was prime. We and several others who were raised with traditional work values and ethics and were self-motivated (the modern term is "sucker") built that corporation to a take of \$6 million in 1994.

It was at that pit stop where I learned more about people than at any other time in my life. My combined years of schooling, teaching and counseling don't come close to down home, realistic, working-stiff education.

Every so often the media spotlights a downer of a human interest story. That's the closest that most of us come to life on the down side - I mean really down. Scores of people who were dealt life's blows came through the c/store doors, but they all had the same basic philosophy: Once you reach the bottom, the only way to go is up. It surprised me to witness in them a trait that is in short supply nowadays, a sense of humor. From these unfortunates, we employees learned to look at life's lighter side, to replace stress and anxiety with humor. Sometimes this was at the expense of super

duh customers, but we didn't let on, so it was okay.

Example #1: Mr. Silk Suit wearing a Rolex took a cashier to task for not setting his gas pump. The cashier calmly walked to the pump, pointed to the instructions adhered thereto and raised the level to the "on" position. What followed inside the store was a humorous discussion on how difficult it was for some people to function outside of their element.

Example #2: A customer asked, "How far is it to Las Vegas?" No commentary is needed here.

Example #3: After "destroying" the store, a couple and their herd of kids piled into their van and took off. Moments later a little girl wandered from the aisles to ask, "Where's my family?". The kid was stuck there for hours. The family was travelling through California before they noticed that the girl was absent.

Example #4: "Oh, the gas pumps aren't automatic? You mean I have to pump it?" See Example #2.

We saw show people, dancers, strippers, limo drivers and the lot pass through our doors. Know what? They complain about their jobs as much as the construction workers who work 70 hour weeks and pull triple time.

Celebrities patronized our joint. They, too, are just people doing a job, ordinary Joes who don't want to be recognized. They included Sammy Davis, Jr., John Madden, Andre Agassi, Tommy LaSorda, Emilio Estevez, Martin Sheen, David Soul, Randall Cunningham (Phil. Eagles), Lauren Tewes (Love Boat), Don Osmond (he doesn't go by Donny anymore), Gladys Knight and Wilford Brimley (Quaker Oatmeal guy).

Other observations include the

following. Although prostitution is illegal in Clark County (yeah, right) our "regular" hookers were in every night to buy condoms, 12 minimum. The most courteous patrons are the participants in the National Finals Rodeo. Chinese are loud. Teenagers are polite when treated with respect as are Bloods, Crips, Skinheads and punkers. On occasion, Japanese will purposely give a cashier too much money - to test their honesty. Prisoners being transported are very quiet. Trucks labeled "Toxic" are free to pull into gas stations.

Surprises lurked behind the restroom doors - everything from crap on the walls to an aborted pregnancy. Armed robberies? Sure. Four of them over the years at different times of day and evening. Two on my shift and one on Penne and Don's. Every element of society passed through our doors. Behind the glitz and glamor of this city that is portrayed to the rest of the world lies a true but unrealistic cross-section of the U.S. population. Eighty percent of our patrons were tourists with locals and transients completeing the figure.

This is the Las Vegas I know best after spending 7 1/2 years in the armpit of the city. What an education.

Submitted to APA V#17
on 4 March 1995
by Marcy Waldie
6980 Wedgewood Way
Las Vegas, NV
89117-4418