



It was expected of **Susie Jones** that she should become a lawyer. To begin with, she was descended from a long line of distinguished legal practitioners, of whom her grandfather, a former Chief Justice of Kenya, was the most eminent “I’m also half Indian, which means that you’re basically expected to be a lawyer or a doctor,” Susie chuckles. “I’m far too squeamish for medicine, so it had to be law, really.”

Susie’s first exposure to the profession came with a six-month stint at Allen & Overy as a paralegal. “I was mainly updating know-how systems, and it gave me an idea of what the culture was like at a big law firm,” she reflects. “When I finished at LSE, the choice of firm boiled down to either A&O or Linklaters for me and it helped that Linklaters had just about the best Real Estate group in town. Real Estate had always interested me and when I started working in that area, I really enjoyed the tangible nature of the work. It was always a source of great pride to me to be able to point at a building and think that I had a small part in helping to bring it into existence. Working with quirky clients, such as architects, was a lot of fun and it was quite thrilling to be part of such a constantly evolving skyline.”

Linklaters was where Susie absorbed the lessons in professionalism that were to serve her well when she decided to run her own business. “Going the extra mile, attention to detail and wanting to produce the very best work that you can came as standard at Links,” she says. “The training that I went through there definitely had an effect on me. In my business now, I have workshops that make my products for me and being a lawyer has helped me to be much more clear and specific about what I want. With customers, I know how to ask the right questions in order to ensure that they get precisely what they’re looking for.”

A self-confessed “real Londoner”, Susie continued to enjoy her time at Linklaters even as the recession took its particular toll on the property market. “Even when the economy started to go wrong, we were still busy, busy, busy,” she recalls. “There was plenty of litigation around and a lot of working highs and lows. It was a crazy time; even though the global economy was in freefall, it was still impossible to leave the office and get a table at a good restaurant.”

Ultimately, however, economic events dictated a radical restructuring of the Real Estate team at Linklaters. “A lot of brilliant people moved on, which was sad and unsettling, and I suppose the Real Estate team also became a bit more corporate-led,” Susie observes. By the time she was due back from maternity leave in the summer of 2012, an idea that had been at the back of her mind for some time was beginning to take shape. “I considered staying on in a part-time capacity, realised that it wasn’t going to work and then decided that I wanted to work for myself, despite my family’s scepticism,” Susie says. “I didn’t actually know what I wanted to do; I trained as a personal stylist, but realised that while it was great fun, I couldn’t see myself doing it long-term. I considered all sorts of options, from proof-reading to cake-making, and a random selection of other things, before I realised that the answer had been staring me in the face the whole time.”

A lover of fine jewellery since childhood, Susie realised that there was a gap in the market when she attempted to buy a piece to celebrate the birth of her son. “I wanted something with personal meaning and I couldn’t find anything in the shops, so I designed a pendant myself and had it made. When people saw it, they loved it, and told me that I should think about doing it for a living. I don’t know why it hadn’t occurred to me before – I can only think that I had concentrated so hard on my legal career, that I had blinkers on.” Mildred Jones Fine Jewellery (www.mildredjones.co.uk) was duly born.

Susie’s business now exclusively sells the “Celebration Pendant”, a hand-made, 18ct gold or platinum pendant, which is personalised with gemstones and engraving, and is designed to be passed down the generations and become part of the family history: a future heirloom. “The Mildred part of the name is just a silly nickname that I was given by my husband but it is also appropriate because it is an old-fashioned name that symbolises the traditional craftsmanship that goes in to my pendants,” Susie explains. “These are modern and wearable pieces, but every aspect of the process – making the pendant, engraving it, stone-setting, polishing – is looked after by a specialist of the highest calibre, who has apprenticed in traditional techniques that have been in use for centuries. I love this mix of old and new. It’s really important to me that all my pieces are individually made in London by people who are at the top of their game.”

Positive word of mouth guaranteed an encouraging reception for Mildred Jones Fine Jewellery. Susie intends to keep her business home-based and UK-focused for the time being. “The idea is for me to enjoy the same lifestyle that I enjoyed as a lawyer from a business that I run from home, so that I can spend time with my family,” she begins. “That doesn’t mean that I’m unambitious; I would love to see one of my pieces in the V&A Museum at some stage, for instance! My aspiration is for the Celebration Pendant to have the kind of reputation and cachet that means that it is the first thing people think of when they wish to celebrate a birth, marriage, anniversary, or any other special occasion. I feel very lucky to play a part in people’s lives in this way.”