

PR person Ann McRoberts: The world is her oyster...



Staff photo by Tim Chevrier

Public relations expert Ann McRoberts sells the good life.

By ED PICCININ
Business Reporter

The prime-time world of finely packaged products and expensively polished images; the sleek cars, the gorgeous singing stars; the money, the glamor, the glitz — that world is just a fantasy for a large part of us mere mortals.

Not so for Ann McRoberts. She lives it. Every day.

The British-born public relations expert has operated out of Mississauga for the past eight years. Her firm, McRoberts and Associates, promotes a wide variety of clients, services, and products.

While she's quick to shatter the illusion of glamor — "There's a lot of work just stuffing envelopes" — she admits the job does have its perks.

"Entertainment is my indulgence," she says. "I love show business; it's the icing on the cake."

Says McRoberts about some of her clients: Nana Mouskouri: "A warm, loving person. She's exactly as perceived." Lou Rawls: "Dy-no-mite." French singer Mireille Mathieu: "Sweet and gentle". Pete Seeger: "Fascinating, interesting man. Dedicated to the cause of mankind." French movie star and entertainer Yves Montand: "Sex personified. He's just gorgeous."

And, as a marginal note, McRoberts work-



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ed with Latin heart-throb Julio Iglesias when he first appeared at Massey Hall, before he became well known to North American audiences.

For McRoberts success did not come overnight. She started as a secretary in an advertising agency. She said promotional advertising is "not something you can just walk into. You have to spend years at it, and there's tough competition."

Her formula for success?

"Don't make idle promises.

"I believe you do have to work hard. And I believe in that personal touch. I let every client feel they are the only client," she said. "Obviously, they know they're not, but if they do feel they're No. 1, they'll come back."

However, McRoberts admits her work on the entertainment scene is only a small part of her business, and was an offshoot of several years of promotions for the hospitality industry.

Even more stimulating, she says, "is the challenge of being creative — coming up with something creative for a new product or service when you know it's been done a million times before."

"What can you do with a new line of salad dressing or gravy thickener?" she asks, adding that success is rewarded by gaining the respect of reputable media people. "That's where the fun is."

In a career of highlights, McRoberts says her work for the Pre-Menstrual Syndrome Centre in Mississauga, the Ontario government's program on battered women and the Women's Directorate on jobs of the future has all been particularly rewarding.

But she says nothing can quite compare with the day she sat in an office in Montreal with her clients, Air Canada. The company had sponsored the Canadian expedition to the summit of Mount Everest and had a radio link with Katmandu.

When Earl Pennington's voice came through with the message — "We made it" — McRoberts said, "I felt I was standing there with them on top of the world. It was a moving experience."