

# 3 women branch out, launch own business



By SUSAN TAUBER

The desire to give personal service to clients spurred three Rochester women into starting their own businesses.

One opened a real estate business, concentrating on low pressure selling in a warm atmosphere. Another opened an advertising agency, offering quality service to industrial accounts. The third opened an art gallery where the novice could feel comfortable.

Each of these women worked for someone else before opening their own places, and have overcome the obstacles of dealing with a predominantly men's world.

Though it isn't unusual for a woman to own an art gallery, Mary Wright still had to prove herself as a businesswoman when she took over the gallery Xochipilli. She became president of the two-year old Rochester gallery in 1972.

"I had to be tougher than a male to get the right answers," Ms. Wright said. "The nature of my business is risky. So many new art galleries don't stay open. I was young (26), single and didn't have many assets."

"Women as art dealers aren't considered odd but a young woman having an art gallery is unusual."

Ms. Wright worked at making Xochipilli different.

"I had always gone through art galleries saying, 'This isn't the way I'd do it.' I was put off by astronomical prices at other galleries, where your heels click on their marble floors and prices aren't posted. I didn't feel that was the way to handle fine arts."



Mary Wright says she had to be "tougher than a male to get the right answers" when starting out with her Rochester art gallery.

WITH NOTHING MORE than a college degree in English and a few jobs, Ms. Wright tackled her dream. She learned to do her own bookkeeping, tax rolls and payrolls, and continues

doing them so she will know if her business is having troubles.

She still has her frame shop as a mainstay of the business—an area that got her through the rough years.

After six years, she's just hired a staff to help her take care of the gallery so she can sell collector's works to corporations for investments.

She can also say that she made the gallery what it is today.

It's a place that isn't afraid of having realistic watercolors and acrylics on its walls next to outrageous ones in the same media. It welcomes the browser as well as the serious collector.

A few blocks away from Xochipilli, on a street with well-kept old homes, is a 100-year-old carriage house bearing the sign, Jeanne Inc., Realtor.

This is the place in Rochester where Jeanne Mair decided to house her real estate company when it opened last spring. It was there she discovered that being a woman doesn't make any difference in real estate. It depends on the type of business person are.

"YOU'LL GET CLIENTS no matter who you are if you're hard working, honest and interested only in selling the type of house the client wants, regardless of the price range," said Ms. Mair.

Ms. Mair worked for over eight years for large real estate firms and helping two of them develop offices in the Rochester area.

"I thought if I'm going to work that hard I may as well be working for myself," she said.

However, she didn't get much support from other real estate companies when she opened her doors.

"But now they recognize I'm going to stay," she said.

Going into real estate was a natural progression for Ms. Mair. Her mother was a real estate broker "when women didn't do those kinds of things," she said.

The job enabled her to spend summer and holiday vacations with her daughter, and gave her time to work on getting her builder's license, which she has almost completed.

Her choice is to remain a small agency, with only six other real estate agents in her office at 512 Madison.

"I tried merging with another com-

pany when everyone was becoming a conglomerate, but I didn't like it. I found I had enough referrals through my own business. I have innovative ideas and can't do them when I work with others," she said.

One of her ideas is a large sign at the airport promoting Jeanne, Inc. Realtor as a place to contact for personal service.

The woman, who was a housewife for 20 years, doesn't see retirement in the near future.

"I love people and I love houses. Selling real estate is another form of social work. It's helping others—that's the real basis," she said.

ALSO IN THE CITY of Rochester is a business called Corbett Advertising. It's different from other advertising agencies—not because it handles mostly industrial accounts—but because it's owned by a woman.

When Barbara Corbett opened her company 1 1/2 years ago, she was one of three women in the metropolitan Detroit area who was president of her own advertising agency.

Ms. Corbett writes the copy for advertisements, and Gene Villeneuve works as the creative director for the agency. Their company has produced award-winning advertisements for such firms as Weir, Mann, Snyder and Rankin, Inc., ITT High Manufacturing Company and French Enterprises.

"I've always been unduly optimistic," she said. "I expected a small business to do well and it has."

Approaching men used to talking about nuts and bolts hasn't been a hazard for her, either.

"Sometimes the men are dubious until they learn how fast I can learn about their product and business. I show them what I have done in the past and talk to them about how I can help them improve their advertising and target it in the right places."

"It's their business to run their business and it's my business to develop advertising that sells their products."

There will never be any seductive women in Ms. Corbett's ads, drawn up in her office at 134 W. University.

"I believe in realistic, truthful and persuasive advertising," she said. "And we develop these from personal contact with clients."



Barbara Corbett was one of three women who were presidents of their own advertising agencies when she started Corbett Advertising 1 1/2 years ago. (Photos by Mindy Saunders)

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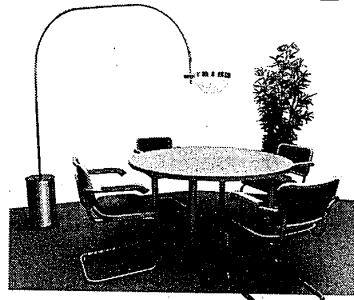
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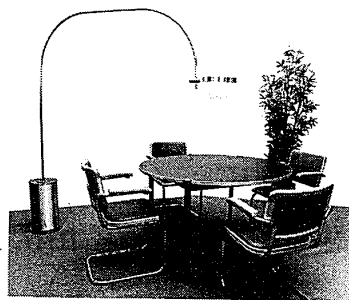
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