

# Broadcaster meets community



Sharon Brown, community relations director for WXYZ-TV, has a job and a half. (Photographed by Gary Friedman)

By CARL STODDARD

"Hello," she says. "I'm Sharon Brown," and her voice swirls around you like warm honey. She leads you down the hallway to her spare little office. And she continues to speak with that rich, gentle voice that has probably found a permanent spot in the memory of millions of Detroit-area television viewers. Since 1972, she worked with WKBD-TV where she directed, produced and hosted a series of public service shows. Then three weeks ago, she became community relations director for WXYZ-TV in Southfield.

THE JOB is a hodge-podge of duties. She must represent the station at a plethora of committee meetings, fund raising dinners, lectures, presentations and official gatherings. She must also channel complaints and news stories to the appropriate department heads within the station, gather general public sentiment and be an unofficial ombudsman.

It is the kind of job that requires energy, a strong desire to take part in the community and a good speaking voice. It also demands a good deal of time.

"Broadcasting has never been just a job to me," she said, lighting another in a long series of cigarettes. "If it takes extra time, I'm willing to do it."

In her first week on the job, the 35-year-old Sharon found herself at a New Detroit meeting, an NAACP meeting, a New Detroit sub-committee, a visit to Cody High School, a Detroit Urban League meeting and a meeting with a local doctor to discuss medical malpractice.

HER SCHEDULE was so heavy, she pointed out, that she hasn't yet had time to sort out the files left by her predecessor, Percy Moore.

Sharon never started out to be in broadcasting. She earned a secondary teaching certificate in 1961 and worked as an English and speech teacher at Hutchins Junior High School in Detroit.

In 1965, while still teaching at Hutchins, she became a disc jockey at WCHB. In 1966 she was WJLB's Girl Friday and soon hosted her own jazz program.

Then, in 1967, she made the jump to television, hosting WTVS-TV's "Occupation Planning." She went from there to WKBD-TV and subsequently to her present job.

She said the impetus to go into broadcasting came while attending Wayne State University. During a student radio production, in which she starred, a professor in the audience

was apparently impressed by her talent and subsequently urged her to develop her skills in broadcasting. She was later one of the first student's in mass communications when Wayne opened the department.

HER JOB at WXYZ represents the first time in a long time that she has not had an audience. Does she miss the audience?

"Yeah, I'm a talent," she said. "I will always love being a talent. Right now I'm behind the scenes. But there are other ways to relate your talent to the community."

Everytime I represent myself in the community I'm using my talent. Her sultry voice constitutes a part of her talent, but she will need to call upon other skills if she is to do the job at WXYZ.

"It's a very vital position," she explained. "It's an extension of the station. Plus, the person in the position must work effectively with the people in the station."

Sometimes she will come across something that might be used as a subject of a news story or local documentary. Sometimes she will pass along that idea to the news program directors. And sometimes the directors will tell her "That isn't news," she said.

She also handles some of the complaints that come into the station.

"THE PUBLIC is always critical, but we do the best we can. I would think Channel 7 tends to be honest. The people are warm and there's a lot of talent here. I think that's sensed out in the community."

She knows something about the senses of the community and has learned how far it can reach. Her appearance on the tube, in fact, produced an unexpected benefactor and fan from a West Bloomfield high school.

His name is Sam Mannino. He invited her twice to talk to classes and at graduation.

"He's a great pr man," she said. "He has lots of energy."

When Sam went to Oakland University in Rochester, he talked with other students and then the university administration.

"SAM WENT to a professor said 'we want to have a class and I've got a great person to teach it.' She will be teaching an undergraduate course in broadcasting. She looks forward to it as an opportunity."

"People knock media left and right, but as long as I'm in it, maybe I can do something about it," she said.

Sharon Marjorie Revels Brown was born in Detroit and lives there now with her daughter, Lori.

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## Hillsdale Who

FARMINGTON—Mary-Alice Menton, 2277 Forestbrook, was recently named to "Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities."

A student at Hillsdale College, she is a graduate of North Farmington High School.

## In honors group

FARMINGTON HILLS—Sheila Chamberlain, 24475 Dohany, was recently tapped for membership in Alpha Psi Omega at Hillsdale College. Alpha Psi Omega is a dramatics honorary recognizing those who have fulfilled the requirements in various phases of college play production.

A senior, she is a graduate of Farmington High School.

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