



PASSION FOR BEAUTY NOW A WAY OF LIFE

Sheree Mutton

by Elisabeth King

Skills honed working part-time in a pharmacy through high school and university proved to be transferable when Sheree Mutton kickstarted her career in journalism. The recently appointed Editor of the much-read Femail section in Daily Mail Australia truly values the patience and understanding needed in giving people great service. “The shopfloor experience in pharmacy also sharpened my belief in the benefits of personal relationships”, she says. “Over the years, I have become a good judge of character, which is invaluable no matter who you are dealing with”.

Developing a strong work ethic from an early age runs deep in my family, says Mutton. “Working at the local Soul Pattinson pharmacy was my first casual job. The pace was hectic but I learned so much about health and beauty in the seven years I worked there. Advising customers on skincare and cosmetics offered a high level of satisfaction and developed my business and people management skills”.

Mutton believes that the key to being a successful beauty editor and working in pharmacy is acquiring the authority and knowledge to answer questions and make recommendations. Self-service and personal research are great, she says, but many times readers and consumers want to interact with a human being they can trust. “I’ve always loved presenting and while I was still at uni I did a stint for FashionTV. Two months later I moved to Fox Sports, writing, editing and reporting on a wide range of sports from rugby league and AFL to swimming and basketball. It was 2008, the year of the Beijing Olympics, and a very exciting time to work for a sports channel”.

After completing a Bachelor of Journalism degree at the University of Wollongong, Mutton’s pharmacy experience helped to further her media career. “I worked as a freelance journalist for Cirrus Media for three years across three health, business and pharmacy magazines - Contact, It’s Your Business and Pharmacy News. I was always interested in news, but working for the trade

press provided a solid grounding in publishing and gave me the chance to get a few bylines under my belt”.

Like all good journalists, Mutton moved quickly through the media ranks to forge a reputation as an all-rounder. In addition to working for Cirrus Media, she also wrote news and entertainment stories for News Corp and style, fashion and travel features for Luxury Travel magazine”.

To paraphrase the old real estate maxim, the reason most people become journalists is - curiosity, curiosity, curiosity. In late 2010, I moved to Fairfax Media, says Mutton. “All the editors I worked with really engaged their teams and helped them to widen their skill sets. One of my steepest learning curves involved becoming a crime reporter. It’s a very intense round to cover and you really get to see all facets of life. To be a good crime reporter you need to build up a strong network of contacts and work hard on developing relationships with all types of people”.

An encyclopaedic general knowledge is the stock-in-trade of a media professional. Mutton also covered politics, fashion, education, health, business and real estate during her time at Fairfax Media. “I also managed online content and social media for leading community newspapers such as the St George & Sutherland Shire Leader and contributed to the Sydney Morning Herald and Illawarra Mercury”.

Mutton polished her on-camera skills as a news presenter on community TV station Television Sydney before heading off to Europe and New York in 2012. On her return to Australia, she worked as a freelance journalist specialising in business and lifestyle features for the start-up magazine, Renegade Collective. “In 2014, I became the online editor of the Australian Women’s Weekly. Helen McCabe, then the editor-in-chief, loved the fact that I had written about so many topics during the early stages of my career, as she had done as a young journalist”.

She certainly needed a varied background for the fast-paced job. “The role gave me plenty of opportunities to use a wide-ranging skill set from creating online lifestyle content to managing social media platforms, analysing site traffic and liaising with the AWW editorial team”, notes Mutton.

After 11 months at Australia’s number one monthly magazine, Mutton was offered the much-coveted role of Beauty and Health Director in January 2015. “It was a huge honour. AWW is such a trusted source and one of the most important parts of the job is to act as a bridge between our readers and experts. One of the greatest parts of the role was the people I met from life-saving surgeons to A-List movie stars. At times I felt humbled. I recently interviewed Dr Dharmica Mistry, an Australian scientist responsible for a groundbreaking discovery that will make it possible to detect breast cancer with a blood test. A breakthrough that will change the lives of millions”.

The media landscape has changed enormously over the past 10 years, says Mutton. “Many people ask me if magazines are competing with bloggers and websites. I always say, there’s plenty of room for all of us. There’s a lot of dubious information on the Internet and my role is to make sure that all the news and views we provide to our huge audience across all demographics is tailored, expert advice. An attitude that dates back to my days as a pharmacy assistant”.

There are other points of similarity too, says Mutton. “A hectic pace, for starters. I work long hours but I love what I do from writing to directing photo-shoots and videos. In mid-October, I am taking on the equally demanding role as Editor of the Femail section in Daily Mail Australia. I have also been very lucky in having some wonderful female mentors like Helen McCabe, who taught me that success follows hard work”.

Photo credit: Della Bass