

A Career of a Different Kind

By Helen Marketti

When requesting an interview or a press kit from an artist, one usually goes through a process of corresponding with a Press Agent, Media Consultant, Tour Manager or some other title before you have access to the artist. They have a role to play and are an important part of keeping the operations running smoothly. Often times, it has been a curiosity of what their lives are like. How did they end up working for so and so? What were they doing before then? What is a typical day like for them? Is there such a thing as a "typical day" in the entertainment world? Armed with such questions, an interview sprouted with Rhonda Brewster, better known as Ronna to her family and friends. Ronna is the Marketing Assistant to Brian Ray. Brian is the bass guitarist for Paul McCartney. Talking with Ronna brought about a new understanding and appreciation for what she does while still finding time for her own interests.

"I am originally from Louisiana and studied commercial art in college. I wouldn't say that I actually pursued any career specifically," recalls Ronna. "I did a lot of freelance art work. I think I've held every

kind of job you could imagine. I've been an assistant manager of a self-service gas station to an executive secretary for the city clerk."

Ronna's life took a turn that began innocently enough when she and a friend decided to travel to California for a vacation six years ago. "My friend really wanted to come to Los Angeles. Neither one of us had ever been out west before. We were in Los Angeles for a total of 24 hours when we looked at each other and decided that this was the place we needed to live."

"The weather had a lot to do with it plus I loved being near the beach," said Ronna. "All of my life I had never really felt like I truly belonged anywhere. Growing up in Louisiana, I never felt that I belonged there. I then moved to Alabama and lived there for a while which wasn't really my niche either. It wasn't until I came to California that I felt "at home". This is where I belonged."

Ronna continues, "My friend and I moved out here nearly one year to the day from when we first were here on vacation. We saved our money, tried to figure out rent, how much money we would need to earn to live on and so forth. We moved out here without a job lined up. We took our savings and were prepared to live off that for at least three months. We figured we would have

enough money to rent an apartment. What we didn't figure on was that no one would rent to us without having a job first. So, we lived in a hotel, which made us go through our money much faster. We were in Los Angeles for a total of 40 days before I found the job that I have now. My friend found a job a week later. Eventually we were able to move into an apartment. Now both of us work at the same place, too."

Luck was about to bring Ronna a break. "I was applying for every job I saw in the

newspaper and on line that I thought I was qualified for," she said. "It was my first job interview that I went on out here and they hired me."

Ronna shares the job duties of her current position. "The company I work for is called, Entertainment Partners which has several divisions. I work in Central Casting Payroll, which is the oldest division for "extras" in Hollywood. They have been in existence for over 60 years. What I do is payroll for the "background talent" which



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means the "extras" that you see in the movies or on television. I work nine hours a day, Monday through Friday. It is interesting work."

So, how does Brian Ray figure into this equation? "First of all I've always been a fan of Paul McCartney," said Ronna. "I had been to one of their shows in Atlanta during the first tour that Brian had done with Paul. I had not yet moved out here. Anyway, I went on line to try and find more information on Brian but I couldn't find anything. There seemed to be plenty of information on the others but not on Brian. So I went to Paul's web site and posted a question on the message board, asking if anyone had any information on Brian Ray. Well, the response to my question was overwhelming. The thread on the message board is still there and still active to this day.

fantastic people who I know I will be close to for the rest of my life. I have met so many people from so many different cultures and learned so much about them. I find it all fascinating."

On a personal level, "The most rewarding thing is having one of my songs recorded. I have been writing songs since I was kid. A local artist out here recently recorded one of my songs. He goes by Vallen but his real name is Mike Jones. He recorded my song, "I Hate Heights" on his new CD. This is the first song that has been recorded so I am very excited about it."

She continues, "I would write songs in elementary school and show them to the music teacher who would then parade me around to each classroom so I



Through that, I started meeting and corresponding with people. When I eventually moved to LA, I attended gigs that Brian was doing with his own band, Black Unicorn. He had sent me an email to come to one of his shows as his guest so then I was able to meet him in person and we became friends. Eventually he asked me to help him with his marketing by sending out CDs, t-shirts and so on to his fans."

Ronna said that working for Brian Ray is her side job and of course enjoys that as much as her other job. "The best thing about what I do job wise is that I have met some

could sing them for my classmates, which I thought was great. I would love to record my own songs because I love to sing but I don't think the world is quite ready for that yet. (laughs) I studied music while growing up, music theory and all of that so I feel I have a good understanding of what is involved with song writing." Over the years, Ronna calculates that she has about three dozen songs that are finished pieces.

Thinking about her life, what she does and how she feels, Ronna said, "I love California. I love the people I have met here. It's a fantastic life."

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