

Henretta builds international reputation

Rochester native ranks among most powerful women in business

By **MARY STONE**

Deb Henretta's bosses at Procter & Gamble Co. wonder why she keeps a vacation home in Rochester, of all places.

Henretta, P&G's group president for Asia, has lived with her family in Singapore for the last five years. Henretta, a Rochester native, can only catch as many as three weeks back home on Lake Ontario.

Henretta, a Cardinal Mooney High School alumna, for most of the last decade has been listed among *Fortune* magazine's most powerful women in business.

This weekend she returns to her college alma mater to deliver the keynote



Photo courtesy of Procter & Gamble

Deb Henretta, Procter & Gamble's group president for Asia, and her family have lived in Singapore since 2005. She calls it "the ultimate of a diverse melting pot of nationalities."

speech at St. Bonaventure University's graduation. Henretta graduated from the

Russell J. Jandoli School of Journalism and Mass Communication in 1983. Two years later—in the same year when she started at P&G—she graduated from S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University with a master's degree in communications.

From serving as a brand assistant in P&G's laundry detergents segment, Henretta rose through the ranks to vice president of fabric conditioners and bleach for P&G worldwide in 1999. That year she was promoted to vice president of North America baby care, where she would be responsible for a turnaround at the division.

Henretta became president of global baby care in 2001 and left that position in 2005 after delivering four consecutive years of record growth in sales, volume and profit—results not seen in nearly two decades.

Today she heads P&G's \$14 billion

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HENRETTA

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retail business in Asia, including on-the-ground operations in 14 major markets and an additional 22 countries through distributor operations.

Since Henretta took over in 2005, P&G Asia has delivered four consecutive years of volume, sales and profit growth—doubling sales through portfolio and distribution expansion, brand building and innovation.

Henretta is serving a second term on Singapore's Economic Development Board, which acts as a board of directors for the nation. In 2009, she participated in a select Economic Strategies Committee commissioned by Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and charged with developing a 10-year strategic plan for the country.

In 2008, Henretta received a U.S. State Department appointment to serve as one of three U.S. representatives on the Business Advisory Council for Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.

Henretta also is active in charitable organizations in Singapore and the United States.

Henretta talked this week with the Rochester Business Journal. In an edited transcript below, she explains how she balances family, business, government and charity activities and how she was able to move through the ranks of an American corporate icon where she never expected to see her first promotion.

Rochester native

ROCHESTER BUSINESS JOURNAL: You are originally from Rochester?

DEB HENRETТА: I was born and grew up in Rochester. In fact, my husband and I still have a home in Rochester, which we use as our summer home. My bosses at P&G have been baffled over having a summer home in Rochester. It's right in Rochester on Beach Avenue, so we have a beautiful property that butts up on Lake Ontario, about a mile away from my parents.

When we were living in the States, we were there every couple of months. But with being in Singapore, we're there one to two times a year. We're up there for a lot of the summer. My husband and kids tend to come back for more of the summer than I do. But I usually get a good three weeks or so up there.

RBJ: Was Singapore your first assignment abroad?

HENRETТА: Singapore is my first international assignment. I did have a short assignment in Europe, which P&G called an extended business leave. ... (That) is probably what helped us realize that we would love an international living assignment that would be longer-term.

RBJ: It's a very different experience in Asia. How did you enmesh yourself in that new culture to educate yourself?

HENRETТА: My assignment just before running Asia was running P&G's global baby-care business. That gave me exposure to Asia. ... We take it from a

globe. I think beyond that we did a lot of research, reading and surfing the Internet to learn as much as we could about Asia. The company also did a wonderful week-long orientation in Washington, D.C., on Asia, the political, social, economic environment of Asia. We did a lot of work with cultural experts there on the differences between Eastern and Western cultures. The company provided that program for my children and husband as well.

First of all when you go over, you have to go with the intent to fully immerse yourself in the culture. I think that's one of the things we did well in terms of helping ourselves and our children acclimate. ... So rather than living in a predominantly American area of Singapore, which you could choose to do, and be right near the American school, we chose to live in a much more diverse neighborhood, which was closer to Singapore's downtown area. On our road, the French ambassador lives, there are Filipino families, there are Indian families, Singaporean families. It was a much more diverse network, and we've tried very hard to get our children immersed in local organizations, not just doing the extracurricular activities through the American school.

Singapore is an incredibly diverse country. You have people from all walks of life, all income levels, and nationalities from all over the world. It's the ultimate of a diverse melting pot of nationalities and culture.

Diverse consumers

RBJ: How does that affect P&G's marketing in reaching that diverse consumer base? What personality traits do you see as a culture that P&G tries to adapt to?

HENRETТА: Five years into this now, ... one of my big ahas was that the world is a whole lot more alike than it is different.

There are some incredible similarities that connect all consumers around the globe, regardless where they're from, in terms of basic consumer needs.

If you think of it, a fundamental consumer in the laundry category, basically she wants the laundry detergent to get her clothes clean; she's going to want the clothes to smell good. She is going to want the clothes to be soft and stay new-looking as long as possible, to hold their shape. You start with some real fundamentals. I like to think of those in the business world as the hard points. Those are the things that provide a seam around the globe, and you do a lot to formulate a scaled

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for the fiscal year ending Dec. 31.

"We do everything in-house and have practically no budget, so that's why we have a CPA who is a board member handle the financial aspects," she said.

Groups that lose tax-exempt status are able to reapply, but most undergo a lengthy process to do so, said Gerald Archibald, a partner at the Bonadio Group with expertise in non-profit and tax-exempt accounting. Those organizations likely will wait six to nine months for a decision, Archi-

Deb Henretta

Title: Group president for Asia, Procter & Gamble Co.

Education: B.A. in communications and journalism, St. Bonaventure University's Russell J. Jandoli School of Journalism and Mass Communication, 1983; M.A. in communications, S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University, 1985

Age: 49

Home: Singapore

Vacation home: Rochester

Joined P&G: May 1985

Family: Husband and three children, ages 20, 18 and 12

Hobbies and interests: government work, volunteer work, spending time with family, ink drawing and gardening

Quote: "I often say that I really do believe you can have it all; just you just can't have it all at one time."

product or scaled marketing program to capture all of those hard points.

You do need to realize too there will be some very important what I call soft points, things that will have to vary by culture and region of the world. The way I try to approach the business is to identify and maximize all the things that can be common; those become hard points, and those are the places you can scale for advantage. Once you deal with all of that, then you do need to do important local tailoring for the different countries and regions of the world. Those things tend—not always, but tend—to be aesthetically based: smells, colors, ingredients. They tend to be a little different around the globe. But there are some benefit differences.

One really good example is in the Western cultures, which are changing with skin cancer and the seriousness of melanoma. But in the West, skin beauty is more defined by tan skin. People are out tanning themselves. The push now is to find out how to safely tan without your skin being vulnerable to wrinkles or skin cancer.

But in Asian or Eastern cultures, beauty is really defined by the whiteness of your skin. So in skin care there is this dichotomy.

In the Eastern culture, what they want is the whitest and the fairest possible skin, and

their contributions are no longer tax-exempt, or if the non-profit organization itself does not know, complaints could be made to the state attorney general and the group could face civil action, Archibald said. A list of revoked organizations will be available to the public at www.irs.gov.

Groups with legitimate reasons for delays in filings could be granted a temporary reprieve. The IRS offers three-month filing extensions to these organizations, during which tax-exempt status will be maintained.

One possible solution involves small groups in danger of losing their exemp-

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communications background probably helped me quite a bit in my early days at P&G.

And then I am a little bit of a creative and maverick thinker. That provided a different way of problem solving versus all of the people who had the MBAs. I don't have a business degree. I have a communications and journalism undergrad and then a master's in communications from Syracuse Newhouse School, and my specialty was advertising. But I think I thought about things differently.

Often I would come up with a different perspective or different solution to a problem where many of my peers were coming at things with an MBA approach or template to problem solving.

My greatest success at P&G so far was helping to turn around P&G's baby-care business. I often tell people that my success there was actually because I thought like a mom and less like a businessperson.

That's what actually the business needed. It's not that I didn't approach it with business fundamentals and didn't put together financially sound propositions, but they were part of programs that would appeal to moms and dads of young children. Sometimes if you're too clinical about the business, you lose sight of the consumer. In the end, you have to appeal to the consumer in order to make the sale.

RBJ: How exceptional is it for a P&G employee to cross different segments as you have?

HENRETTA: P&G likes to combine continuity with fresh eyes on the business. I think most people do have a balance between staying in a business long enough to make an impact and live with your results, but also making sure that people move through the businesses. But I think the insight of a journalist being a little bit more of a generalist maybe made that movement a little easier for me.

Another area where journalism helped was curiosity. You don't go into journalism unless you're curious. You want to know what happened and why, who was involved. I think that curiosity and comfort with asking questions and not always having to have the answer initially maybe made me a little bit more open to creative solutions.

Work-life balance

RBJ: How do you balance all of your activities and roles as wife, mother and manager?

HENRETTA: I think the first thing to say is it's hard. I think people who say the work-life balance thing is easy, I think they're either lying to themselves or to you. I guess the way I like to think of it now—one of the phrases I use with wom-

en's groups—is you have to be comfortable and accept that juggling is part of the journey. If you accept that, it makes a whole lot of things easier because you're not expecting smooth sailing.

You don't expect every decision you make is going to be easy, because you're always juggling. I think just acknowledging that becomes somewhat mentally freeing. I speak a lot on the subject. You've got to be "choiceful" not just about what you're going to do but what you're not going to do. I tell women especially it's so important to make the list of what you're not going to do, because women in particular have this incredible ability to do what I call bucketing. They make the label so big on that bucket that they can throw everything into it, so they don't really make choices.

Only if both lists are equally robust can you be willing to admit that you've really made some choices. The second part is that you have to accept the consequences, and there are always going to be consequences for doing or not doing something. You have to be comfortable with that.

Another tip I give folks is that you have to be comfortable asking for help. One of the catchphrases I use for myself and other people is "You have to be able to ask for help when needed and accept help when offered."

I had a tough time doing that early in my career. You want to think that you're this independent, capable working mother and you didn't need any help. You get to a point—I did after my second and third kids—that you realize it's just not possible. When you get more comfortable with asking for and accepting help, I think that's a huge enabler in the balance thing.

Another thing I have talked about is how I try hard to evaluate balance over a long period of time. If I looked at my life in any given week, I might be a great mom in one week, and I might be a little behind on e-mails or proposals. Another week, I am really focused on getting stuff done for work, but maybe I didn't make it home for dinner every night that week. If you look at it on a weekly basis, it always looks like you failed. But if you look at it on a quarterly or yearly basis, I think it becomes easier to see balance.

I can look at those longer-term periods and say ..., "On average, I'm doing a pretty good job at both." But you can't determine it by day or week. The short-term, you just die trying."

Being 'choiceful'

RBJ: You're engaged in so many things. Could you give an example of one or two things that you don't do or wouldn't do?

HENRETTA: There are a couple of things. Believe it or not, I love art. I thought going into school that I wanted to be a graphic artist. There was a time in my younger days, before children, that I did a lot of ink drawing, a technique called pointillism. I've got to tell you, I haven't picked up my pens in probably 20 years. It's something I keep telling myself, that as my kids get older and I have a little more time, I'll get back to it. I don't know if I'll ever get back to it.

Before kids, I used to love to garden. We had this beautiful circular garden in our front yard for the first 10 years I was married. People used to stop into our driveway to compliment us on this garden. It was my pride. It was my baby at the time. But I haven't gardened in forever.

Some of the things I've chosen not to do, at least at this point in my life, are probably things that feed my other passions, because right now my passion is my job; my passion is the government work I'm doing, which over the last couple of years I have found fascinating. I think there is a need for people who have some good ideas and energy to get involved with government to figure out what we need to do with all of these emerging problems that are happening globally.

Some of the personal interests are probably the ones that go by the wayside.

RBJ: These opportunities you have with government to make changes and to do things that have an impact for such potential good, the payoff in terms of the help it's going to provide people more than compensates for what you're missing in your personal passions?

HENRETTA: Yes. Hopefully, God willing, there will be a time for that again. I already see that with one child at university, the second one on the way. My husband and I sometimes look at each other and say, "My God, what are we going to do with ourselves?"

I often say that I really do believe you can have it all; you just can't have it all at one time. I have to meet people who are more talented at this whole balance thing who have that figured out, but I haven't been able to do that. So it's about being 'choiceful.'

So the consequence—of the career I've chosen, wanting the government work that I'm doing, wanting to make sure that we're doing our bit to give back to society through the charitable programs that my husband and I are involved with right now—is that I don't have the time right now to pursue those passions.

I am finding that sometimes if I think creatively about my 19-hour plane ride back to the States, there is actually some opportunity there.