

# Marketing All-Stars

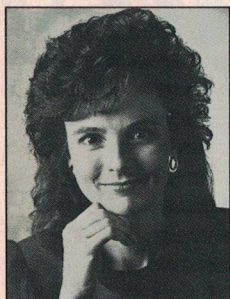
Can marketing move mountains? Can promotion cure society's ills? Can direct mail outrun its junk-mail monicker, warming the heart—and piquing the curiosity—of even the most jaded letter-opener? If not, it's certainly not for lack of trying, as the tales below testify. The 15 members of our first Marketing All-Star Team—chosen by the staffs of ADWEEK'S MARKETING

WEEK and ADWEEK's Special Reports—have slain dragons. They've broadened the definition of the field, moved into territories where they once weren't welcome, taken on causes that once were deemed too controversial—in the process building image, creating profit, making a difference. Individually they've run the gauntlet. Collectively, they could take on the world.

## Mary Anne Jackson

### Entrepreneur

*Necessity, timing, and the right blend of skills turned her into the mother of invention*



Too many Sundays slaving over a hot stove gave Mary Anne Jackson the inspiration she needed to launch one of the country's most promising new companies.

Back in 1986, Jackson, concerned about the quality of her 1-year-old daughter's nutrition, decided to make her meals from scratch. But Jackson's marketing post with Beatrice Cos. left her little time for cooking, so she spent her Sundays preparing enough food for the babysitter to serve all week long. When the buyout turmoil at Beatrice eliminated

her job, Jackson started researching the potential market for a line of nutritious, convenient foods for the burgeoning number of children of busy parents like herself.

Responses to the 2,000 questionnaires Jackson sent to other mothers revealed a huge unmet demand for foods that could be prepared quickly and easily—preferably in a microwave—that provided lots of nutrients but little salt or preservatives, that wouldn't spoil if left at a babysitter's house all day, and that tasted so good kids would actually like eating it. Using some contacts from her days at the Swift/Eckrich division of Beatrice, Jackson then scouted the country for a manufacturing plant that would produce her product under contract.

My Own Meals, the result of Jackson's efforts, includes simple but healthful meals made of such staples as pasta, chicken and lentils. Jackson used her experience developing re-tort packaging for



### Into the mouths of babes

her biggest coup to date: 86 Toys "R" Us outlets, with the hope of more to come.

Given the huge potential customer base and My Own Meals' success, it's not surprising that other companies have since launched similar products. Geo. A. Hormel & Co. came out with Kid's Kitchen and ConAgra Inc. brought out Kid Cuisine.

This year, Jackson will spend \$500,000 on advertising, including a 30-second TV spot that features herself, daughter Katie and the children of one of her stockholders. "I'm not the best actress in the world," admits Jackson, but with her company's product selling like gangbusters, she doesn't really have to be.

—Christine Donahue

Swift/Eckrich to come up with the line's shelf-stable packaging.

After getting good reception from Chicago-area supermarkets, Jackson now has distribution for her product in 1,000 Midwest grocery stores, and