

# Lifetime achievement award for makeup artist Ann Brodie

In 1979, her husband Bill Brodie was hired as production designer for the movie *Silence of the North* being shot in Canada. The couple decided to buy a house and stay two years. They never left. They were residents of Cramahe when he passed away four years ago.

Ann's skill at the makeup chair continued to provide her with plenty of opportunity after the move to Canada. Angela Lansbury, Glynis Johns, David Bowie, Catherine Deneuve, Glenda Jackson, Faye Dunaway, and on and on - they've all gone before the cameras wearing her make-up.

Not surprisingly, her name is in the credits for many "name" movies including *Little Gloria*, *Barry Lynden*, *Children of a Lesser God*, *Moonstruck*, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* and, most recently, *Cinderella Man*.

In 1997-8, Anne was nominated for an Emmy. In 2003, she won the Hollywood Make-up Artists Award for *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*.

One might think someone who has associations with such a host of famous people might have a star complex herself. After all, she has worked with directors Sir Laurence Olivier, Richard Lester, Peter Yates and John Guillerman. It is quite the opposite.

For all of her world travels and experiences with the rich and famous, Ann Brodie is extraordinarily unassuming, not one to gain notoriety on the coattails of her coworkers. Perhaps that's because she sees her career as one that's "about someone else".

A consummate professional, Ann recognizes the importance of her role in the production of a movie or television production. The actors must have absolute faith in her work, and they have to like her. They see her at 5 a.m. She starts their day and she's the last one to make any final adjustment before they step in front of the camera. She has to be in their faces without being a distraction.

When the lights go on, her work must be so perfect, it takes the viewer to the time and place of the action, whether the actor is off in the distance or face filling the screen.

Ann says it's common for well-known actors to request their own make-up artist. For years, she was the personal make-up artist for Canadian actor Donald Sutherland, who once commented, "You don't make me up, you make up the character."

She remembers one movie where Mr. Sutherland had to look 100 years old. He wouldn't wear prosthetics, complicating her

task. In *The Sunday Times*, Ann remembered seeing the red face in Van Gogh's *The Post*. The way the painter had painted the young man made him look like an old soldier. She tore it out. When the time came to make up Mr. Sutherland, she stuck red all over his face. It worked.

### Her start in the business

It was back at Granada TV in England Ann got her start. Television stations would hire women on as permanent staff, but in feature films, make-up was the domain of men. It was a period of relative calm in the business following the tumultuous war years.

Ann recalls hearing stories about movie-making in Britain during those times. The young make-up artists who were off fighting were replaced by people from the theatre, and circuses. The union meetings during those years were terrible, with people swinging from the ceilings and terrible shouting matches.

Periodically, well-established artists were called to the airport to make up someone for a drop behind enemy lines. Ann wonders at the success of these operations when rain could dissolve a false moustache or change a look.

One of the first productions in which she was involved was the pilot for *Coronation Street*. The studio was in Manchester, not far from Liverpool where an upstart foursome named The Beatles were beginning to make themselves known.

She says people were shocked at the Beatle haircuts: "They weren't long by today's standards and they were always sparkling clean," says Ann. She made them up the first time they were on TV and worked with them several times over the next few years.

Others came along as her skills were acknowledged. She's been dubbed "queen of the golden oldies" for her work with Bette Davis, Katherine Hepburn and Loretta Young. Some of their autographed photos line the walls of her Colborne study.

One has to think Ann Brodie found the perfect life's work when she started at Granada TV over 40 years ago. She can't think of anyone she feels she missed making up. She has travelled the world, working on sets in Spain, Portugal, Germany, Argentina, Ireland, and Poland.

Having been recognized as a talent for many years, she has had the freedom to choose movies because she's liked the actors or the script.

There is a stream of highlights.

Near the top of that list was working with Stanley Kubrick on the cinematic masterpiece *Barry Lynden*. Some people

found it difficult to work with Mr. Kubrick, but, Ann says, as long as you recognized he wasn't questioning your work, there was no problem. Sometimes Mr. Kubrick would try eight or nine makeup artists on an actor. If it the look wasn't what he was looking for, he would try another makeup artist.

Barry's mother in the movie was a challenge. In Ireland, she had the big rosy cheeks and appearance of no makeup common to the poor. Later in the film, she had to be aged 10 years and made to look like she was wearing lead makeup typical of high society of that day. Mr. Kubrick kept saying, "She's not right - each time she looks more like Maureen O'Hara."

When she looks back, Ann remembers how much she learned with the director Kubrick.

"You had to go a bit further and try new things. It was a fabulous experience."

### No retirement now

There is no retirement in sight for Ann Brodie. Like many artists, she plans to continue as long as she is physically able - or when people stop asking for her. Clint Eastwood has a production designer who is in his 90s and still does a good job, she notes. The movie business doesn't age discriminate behind the scenes, so she's secure her work on that count.

Being a makeup artist is not glamorous, she says; there is some self-sacrifice. Forget those reservations for dinner or the theatre if you're needed on the set.

It's a terribly risky business to go into, she says. As a freelancer, you never know when you may next work. Despite that, Ann says she and husband Bill never considered the risks; they kept doing it because they couldn't help it.

Last year, as a daily makeup artist on *Cinderella Man*, Ann started work at 4:30 a.m.. It was no eight-hour day with breaks. She would go to bed early when she could, but there were times she was driving home as the sun rose. One perk, though, of being on set is that food is good and it's everywhere. There are rules about when the crew must be allowed a second meal break, unlike when she started in England and a trolley would roll past with sausage sandwiches and tea for sale at 10 a.m..

The work is always changing.

In the early days in England, makeup people did everything.

Someone once told her she was awfully good at creating the feeling of blood and gore and wondered if she had taken a course. She jokingly replied she'd done a cooking course. It wasn't far from the truth,



as many of her materials came from the kitchen. She would cook up various concoctions and try them out. That could bring interesting effects as flies buzzed around the actors.

Artists would sometimes share their secrets. She remembers famous makeup artist Dick Smith who developed "a pile of stuff" and was incredibly generous.

Nowadays, she says, there are magazines selling all that's needed and actual prosthetics departments; artists today wouldn't get away with some of the kitchen concoctions used years ago.

And lighting has improved. Ann says a great deal can be done with lighting. It's critical to success; without it, her work is pointless, she says.

### A lifelong love

Ann loves the work. It has given her a feeling of luck combined with privilege. She becomes animated as she describes the camaraderie on a film set. She says it's like a family unit without the strife.

Ann maintains relationships with a few of her peers but, with most, it's simply a commitment while you're on the job. You have to rely on the whole crew; everyone is aware they have to behave.

As a makeup artist, she works in close conjunction with the hairstylist, production designer and costume designer. Sometimes, she has makeup artists working under her; in *Cinderella Man*, there were as many as 25 at times. In those situations, she does a lot of the research, has pictures for her crew, explains the look she wants and provides a makeup map. While one of her assistants is overseeing the other artists, Ann is in the makeup trailers with the lead actors.

Today, the profession is unlike like the 60s when young artists could learn on the job. Ann recommends a college course to get a good grounding. After that, it's a combination of luck, determination and talent.

When the opportunity comes, jump at it, she says; don't say "I can't". After all, how many times will you get a chance? And forget about calling in sick on the job. If you can't walk, they'll send a wheelchair for you.

Good health is necessary and it's something Ann has been able to count on. She attributes it to growing up in the war years with fruit and vegetables and no excess of anything. Thinking further on that, she was reminded of a statement made by Katherine Hepburn: "People either have energy or they don't. And if they don't, forget it."

What does Ann Brodie do for recreation? She studies paintings, finding them useful in her work. She reads a lot, embroiders, and watches movies - of course!