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## High Profile: Lynda June Anthony

*A leader in what was once a man's world of the timber industry, Lynda Anthony brings a fresh perspective as founder of the 'Forest Feminists.' She's also a strong voice for workplace safety.*

by Samantha Friedman *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, 9.28.08 P1D



EL DORADO — As a child, she played in the sawmill her father managed in Springhill, La. As a high school cheerleader overlooking the Springhill Lumber Co. during football games, she thought the mill should be cleaned up. And as an adult, she has made it her life's work to ensure that Anthony Forest Products Co.'s facilities are safe for its almost 400 employees.

Lynda Anthony is vice president for human resources, safety and environment at the company, headquartered in El Dorado. This weekend, she hands over the gavel as 2008 chairman of the Southern Forest Products Association.

Not only has she been the first woman chairman of the New Orleans-based nonprofit trade organization for producers and consumers of Southern pine products, she is also part of its first father-daughter chairman legacy. Her father, Clary Anthony of Springhill, is retired from his role as Anthony Forest Products president and served as association chairman in 1993.

"I never imagined at that point that I would be working for the family business one day and that I would be in this industry," Lynda Anthony says of her early — and prescient — criticisms of the company's facilities. "It's funny to me because it was kind of like this was a clue about what my future would hold.

"I believe so strongly in safety, and I think it's key to an organization's excellence," she says of the role she has carved out for herself at the Anthony firm. "It has been such an honor and privilege for me to see the evolution of our company's safety program. We started really close to the bottom, and now we're one of the premier companies. I'm so proud of what everybody's accomplished."

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“We were just an accident-prone industry, and nobody really took any safety measures,” Clary Anthony says. “[Workplace safety awareness] was just coming to the forefront when she was moved into that position. She was telling [the board and management] that accidents could be prevented, and she got a real negative response — that there was no way, that accidents just happened at sawmills.

“But she has proved otherwise.”

In 1983, Lynda Anthony was between jobs. She had earned a bachelor’s degree in Spanish literature and a master’s degree in linguistics at Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge, spent a year living with a French family in Paris, taught English as a second language at LSU and then Centenary College of Louisiana in Shreveport, married, had two daughters, then divorced. Given her family’s history in the lumber business dating to the early 20th century, her father thought she could find a place in the company, too.



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She says the suggestion was completely “out of the blue.” As then-president, he named her plant manager of the plywood plant in Plain Dealing, La. She later managed the laminated beam plant that replaced it. A wood chip mill now occupies that site. That

particular facility was close to Shreveport, which remains her primary residence.

“I knew nothing about machinery, I knew nothing about manufacturing, and I still don’t know much about it, and I’m not very interested in that at all, but I was interested in the employees,” she says.

Bequeathed with the independence to determine her appropriate role at Anthony Forest Products, her first question was, “What do we need?”

“I noticed we didn’t have a formal safety program, there was no employee manual with all the company rules, we had some benefits, but they weren’t very good, and our environmental program certainly needed some refining, so that’s where I decided to put my energy and start creating my own job,” she says.

Her first task was to evaluate the state of each of the company's six facilities. In addition to the Plain Dealing plant, the company operates a chip mill in Troup, Texas; Southern pine lumber producing mills in Atlanta, Texas, and Urbana, Ark.; and engineered wood laminating plants in El Dorado and Washington, Ga. With corporate offices in El Dorado, the company owns 91,000 acres of timberland in Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas and a research center in Garland City, Ark., and partners in operating a joint venture I-joist plant, Anthony-Domtar, Inc., in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada.

"We had an unenviable safety record for sure," she says. "Accidents and injuries were very common, unfortunately, so our worker's comp premium was very high."

Being in a high-risk pool because of its high rate of workplace injuries, the company paid nearly \$1 million per year in workers' compensation insurance premiums, she learned at a corporate meeting in the late 1980s.

"Kind of innocently and naively, I said, 'We need to do something.' They [the board of directors] said, 'OK, do it.'"

That challenge would direct the path and legacy of her career.

### **'ZERO' IS THE MANTRA**

To this day, she sticks to a mantra: "Zero accidents, zero injuries." She depends on the participation of the company's close to 400 employees.

"My story was that I had three strikes against me: I was a woman in a predominantly male-dominated industry, I was an Anthony, and I represented management," she says of those first conversations asking plant workers what they needed to make their jobs safer. "It took about a year to start building some trust."

As she responded to their requests, like providing better light for one debarker in the Atlanta mill, word spread of her project, and employees began approaching her with suggestions.

"They were just amazed, I think, that they were recognized, that they were listened to, that somebody acknowledged them," she says. "It's so simple. It's what we all want, really."

To become educated in the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's federal

regulations and related state regulations, the company sent Anthony to courses at the National Safety Council, a nonprofit that teaches prevention of accidental injury and death in the workplace. Once improvement in safety conditions became obvious, the board of directors authorized Anthony to hire three environmental health and safety coordinators, to whom she could delegate responsibilities.

“We were the advocates for the employees, and we started bridging the gap more and more between management and employees,” she says. “As we gained the support of the employees, and as we engineered out all of the physical hazards, accidents started decreasing. It was very fulfilling to see.”

The tangible results included savings of hundreds of thousands of dollars per year in workers’ compensation premiums. For the past 11 years, Anthony says, the average premium has been \$254,000, a reduction of 75 percent from that almost \$1 million 20 years ago.

“The investment in the employees and in safety has certainly had a dramatic impact on our bottom line, but to me, and I think our company believes this too now, the real bottom line is that our employees go home every day without an injury,” she says.

To keep her mills in line with OSHA standards, says Charlotte Humphries, an Anthony Forest Products environmental health and safety coordinator out of Atlanta, Texas, “I conduct safety meetings with the employees, do mill site inspections looking for things that could cause an accident, make sure the employees are wearing their personal protective equipment and see that the supervisors hold bimonthly safety meetings.”

Progress has required more than eliminating dangerous equipment. Anthony also had to create a “safety culture,” in which her employees believed in and coordinated their efforts with hers. Much to the initial chagrin of her plant supervisors and employees, she invited OSHA to inspect the company’s mills and offer recommendations on improvements as well as help draft written safety policies.

She applied for the U.S. Department of Labor-OSHA’s Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP), which recognizes small businesses with commendable records in workplace safety and makes them exempt from regular inspections. All six Anthony Forest Products locations have received the certification, which according to Anthony, makes it “the only company in the country in our industry with multiple facilities which are all SHARP-certified.”

Out of pride for this acknowledgment, she says, her whole staff is now on board to ensure safety in its traditionally dangerous environment.

“We are so proud now of being a leader in our industry in safety,” she says. “I always like to say that accidents don’t happen by accident and safety doesn’t happen by

accident. Your management and the employees have to partner together, respect each other and listen to each other.”

Consequently, the company’s personnel turnover rate has decreased.

“It affects your morale, it affects your productivity, it affects the quality of your product,” she says. “Now I will hear from everybody — the management and employees — that in our business, it’s possible to have no accidents. That’s where the shift in the safety culture and attitude has changed. They realize now that you can have both safety and production at the same time. In fact, you have more production.”

As she has become an expert in workplace safety, she has made it a priority to share her knowledge with others. Earlier this decade, she served on the Workplace Health and Safety Committee for the Society for Human Resource Management. There, she met an employment lawyer named Edwin Foulke Jr., who after being appointed by President Bush, became the Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA in 2006. Anthony capitalized on that relationship by bringing Foulke to Little Rock a year ago to headline a luncheon hosted by the Arkansas Department of Labor. The state’s small businesses, chambers of commerce and trade associations networked with the head of OSHA as he told them of the federal agency’s workplace safety successes and future goals.

Similarly, Anthony Forest Products helped develop the Arkansas SHARP Association, which meets quarterly and partners with Chambers of Commerce to hold training conferences so other businesses can benefit from its expertise and share their own experiences.

## **MOVING UP IN THE RANKS**

Lynda Anthony has become a leader in the lumber industry beyond her own region by moving up the ranks of the Southern Forest Products Association. Anthony Forest Products has a long history as a member of the trade organization; as Anthony concludes her year as its first female board chairman this weekend at the annual meeting in San Antonio, the company celebrates its 60th year as a member of the organization. Her father was chairman in 1993, as were her uncle, Bruce Anthony, in 1972, and her cousin, Steve Anthony, in 2001. Her one sibling, older brother Mark Anthony of Atlanta, Texas, and now Vice President of Mineral Resources for Anthony Forest Products, is a previous board member.

Digges Morgan, president of Southern Forest Products Association, says Anthony’s contributions to the organization have included governmental affairs work relating to federal and state legislative and regulatory issues, coordinating and strengthening relationships with related associations and keeping the association financially sound. She was the first woman board member and is currently the only, although there have

been a few others since she joined in 2002, Morgan says.

The organization's dues-paying member companies produce more than half of the Southern pine lumber in the country, according to the association's 2007 annual report. Members come from 11 states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia. To better represent its members' products, the organization has increased its marketing in the areas of engineered and framing, industrial, international and treated wood. Latching onto clients' growing awareness of "green" building strategies, the organization markets wood as the most sustainable building material.

"It's quite an honor for her and also for our association and the industry to recognize a woman as a leader in what has been a male domain for years past," Morgan says. "I think that she was looked upon as having the capability and the leadership to bring the association forward. She's done a lot of good coordinating work that's helped advance our association with our sister associations."

When she steps down Tuesday as immediate past-chairman, she will serve as pension committee chairman and a member of the executive, nominating and strategic planning committees.

## **A FEMALE PERSPECTIVE**

Inspired by the male-focused fellowship and networking opportunities in her industry, Anthony founded her own version for the small but growing number of women she encountered in the field. Since 2004, she has yearly invited the "Forest Feminists" for a retreat at Anthony Forest Products' Arrowhead Ranch near Tilden, Texas.

"She's created an opportunity that has a uniquely female perspective and is authentic to who we are as women in our industry," says forest feminist Debbie Brady, who is president of the Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association Inc. in Tyrone, Ga. "It's an opportunity to develop relationships that you can only do in an informal way over a period of time. On a personal level as well as a professional level, [the annual meetings] can help all of us in doing what we do better and in working together more cohesively."

Heidi Brock, vice president for Federal and International Affairs at Weyerhaeuser, a forest products company in Washington, seconded Brady.

"Lynda Anthony is somebody [who] has been a great mentor and role model for a lot of us as women in the forest products industry," Brock says. "She is really trying to infuse a sense of the opportunity to collaborate with one another and build relationships, find ways to help one another be successful while we also, in some cases, respect the

boundaries that we might have as competitors.”

At home at Anthony Forest Products, Anthony’s a good supervisor, says Humphries, who has been an environmental health and safety coordinator for the company for the past nine years.

“She’s a wonderful leader,” Humphries says. “She’s not a micromanager — she knows that we know what our jobs are and what she expects of us. She inspires you to want to know better, want to do more.”

**SELF PORTRAIT** - Lynda Anthony

**DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH:** July 9, 1947, Springhill, La.

**MY FAVORITE TREE IS:** The Southern yellow pine, also known as the longleaf pine.

**MY FAVORITE CITIES ARE:** Chicago and Barcelona. These are wonderful cities but even more wonderful because my daughters live there.

**MY FAVORITE BOOK IS:** The Complete Far Side, by Gary Larson.

**MY HOBBIES ARE:** Exercising and watching the sunrise while I exercise, writing letters to my daughters (I write them at least once each week, and I started this in 1995 when my first daughter went to college), watching foreign films (my love for languages and other cultures), being on EClubSoda calls (my love for life — see [www.eclubsoda.com](http://www.eclubsoda.com)), gardening (I love my flowers) and watching sunsets while not exercising.

**IN WORKING WITH MOSTLY MEN:** The best part is that I stand out in a crowd. The worst part is that I stand out in a crowd.

**REGARDING ADVICE:**, Don’t give advice. Be curious.

**ONE WORD TO SUM ME UP:** Compassionate.