



Every now and then you get a chance to chat with someone you admire. - Elizabeth "Boo" Twohy, (pronounced "2 E") is a true inspiration to me. She is the

president of Capital Concrete, Inc. in Virginia, and the first female elected as the chairperson of the National Ready-Mixed Concrete Association (NRMCA). I couldn't wait to ask her a few questions. You are now invited to be a fly on the wall during our conversation. I'm sure you will enjoy hearing her wisdom in her own words.

**Lisa:** Your late father, John Twohy IV, started this company in 1951. I understand he has six daughters, and you and your sister Helen Whittemore currently run the company, which is made up of four locations in Virginia with five plants, 45 trucks, and 90 employees.

**Boo:** Yes, I have been president since 1990. My focus is on overall operations, sales, marketing and growth. Helen runs the office and finance departments.

**L:** Did you and your sister "fight" over who would be president?

**B:** No fights, only discussions and brainstorming. Our family is committed to one another and understands as a unit we come first and then the business. The business is run as a legacy to our parents, John and Peggy Twohy. They taught us to grow a company based on people. To be inclusive and to communicate with both employees and customers is our goal. Never ever think you can do it alone.

**L:** Are you married? Do you have children?

**B:** Yes, for 30 years now, and I have three daughters.

**L:** I have to ask -- how did you get the nickname, Boo?

**B:** My parents called me Boo and it stuck.

# Women In The Mix



By Lisa Weaver

## An Interview With Elizabeth "Boo" Twohy

**L:** How young were you when you started in this business?

**B:** My father offered me a job with Capi-



Elizabeth "Boo" Twohy

tal in 1975. I was 23 years old. I've been in this business now for 32 years.

**L:** Did you attend college?

**B:** Yes, in 1974 I graduated from the University of Virginia with a degree in commerce, with a concentration in management. I am still very active with the university.

**L:** I have read that you have done about every job in your company.

**B:** I have done most jobs. Although, I have not used a jack hammer or run a crane.

**L:** Have you delivered concrete to customers?

**B:** I started driving. I have the utmost respect for drivers. But I do not employ drivers. I employ ambassadors of our company who walk the walk and talk the talk. They must not only drive, they must sell, service and please the customer.

**L:** Which job surprised you the most and why?

**B:** That's a hard one. I guess I was not surprised by dispatch, but excited by it. I was able to control the company, when we were small, by sitting in the hot seat. I dispatched for five years and never was able to meet a customer. I sold over the phone and created trust by just following through. Dispatch is the heart beat of the business. You connect the dots. Drivers to customers, customers to sales – sort of like a puzzle in motion.

**L:** I love your "open door policy" when it comes to employees. Was that your idea or something your father started?

**B:** I will say my father promoted that idea. He was a wonderful listener. I come from a family of mostly women and we like to communicate. At present, both Helen and I have an open door policy. Employees are teammates, and by listening to one another we learn. Communication is the most important thing we do. Employees do not need to find company direction by rumor. We share our strategy, our plans, our challenges, with the entire company. We need each member to believe in the company, so that the goals are attainable.

**L:** Have there been any issues from a male employee who didn't want a female boss?

**B:** Along the way there have been situations that were uncomfortable. And because our industry has been historically male-dominated, the situations have dealt with men. On the other hand, more frequently I have found men to be willing to help me learn. They have helped me bridge the gaps. Not working construction growing up, I did not have the basics down as most men might have. I joined my father when times were tough. We were small – one plant and five trucks. I learned quickly. I filled in where I was needed most. I have found if you want to learn, the folks in our industry will teach you. My father taught me to get dirty and not be afraid of a challenge. If you want to do the job, go do it.

**L:** Do you have any female employees who are not in administrative roles?

**B:** I have females employees in every aspect of the business – driving, batching, shop, human resources and training.

**L:** As a female, how do you build a solid customer relationship with mostly male customers? Do you entertain them with trips, golf, etc.?

**B:** I do not do a lot of entertaining. I enjoy my customers, and I like getting to know them. My commitment is to their business and how I can help them be successful. Customers are important. I believe it is up to us to meet their needs, to help them solve their problems, to help them make money. When I sell a job, I am looking to create a relationship with the people in the company. I want to connect with the individuals. I want them to know I will find their answers. I want them to know I care.

**L:** Why do you feel it is important to be involved in state and national concrete ready-mixed concrete associations?

**B:** Trade associations are how the industry works together. It's how we can collectively create opportunities for our

businesses. The stronger the industry is as a whole, then the stronger the individual companies will be. Each trade association has a role--the state associations work at the local level where all the action is. The ready mixed concrete business is a very local business. However, federal laws impact us at the local level, and that's why I'm also active in our national organization to have NRMCA work at that level in Washington.

**L:** What are your goals as chairperson for NRMCA?

---

***“Trade associations are how the industry works together. It's how we can collectively create opportunities for our businesses. The stronger the industry is as a whole, then the stronger the individual companies will be.”***

---

**B:** My goals are basic, but they are the foundations: First, to be sure all companies in the industry understand that our strength is in our numbers, and everyone's involvement in sharing experiences. Second, I want our industry to work together in a unified and coordinated fashion. The state associations, with their role at the local level, can provide NRMCA the guidance for their programs to support the local activities. That's why NRMCA created the state affiliate program which places state association producer members on the NRMCA board. I believe this is one of the most important initiatives we have. Finally, education is key. NRMCA has the ability and has created a variety of education programs for the producers covering all major areas of our companies-- from sales, management, technology, and operations. We have to get all companies to understand the value of continuing education for their employees. As each company commits more resources to education, our industry becomes stronger. I use NRMCA as an educational resource every day. In addition, NRMCA has been significantly involved with the Concrete Industry Management program which is

really starting to produce the next generation of industry professionals. The program just in Middle Tennessee State University has over 326 undergraduates this year, which includes 21 women. The program has created an avenue for women to enter the industry. It is truly exciting to watch the numbers grow.

**L:** What challenges do you still face as a female in this industry?

**B:** Women in our industry, as well as the whole construction industry, are still a

vast minority. The challenge is still in our acceptance in a male-dominated business. But, as a female, I see only opportunities. Challenges are what make life interesting. As my father said, “If you want to do it, go ahead.”

**L:** Who was/is your mentor?

**B:** My father. He taught me by example and inspired me to communicate and be empathic to all people.

**L:** Boo, thank you for sharing your thoughts. I believe your words will inspire a lot of people in our industry. You are already an inspiration to me.

## **About the Author**

Lisa Weaver is a sales representative for Ernst Concrete in Dayton, OH. She has been in the industry since 1997. Lisa is currently on the board of directors for American Concrete Institute/Greater Miami Valley Chapter; Ohio Ready Mixed Concrete Association's (ORMCA) Concrete Futures and ORMCA's L.E.A.R.N. (Ladies Educational and Ready Mix Network) in which she is a founder. She is certified in ACI Field Testing and as an ACI Flatwork Technician. She is also a certified Concrete Technician and Sales Certified through ORMCA.

Lisa can be reached at [lweaver@ernstconcrete.com](mailto:lweaver@ernstconcrete.com)