

ST. LOUIS *Women* ON THE MOVE

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**ANDY'S SEASONING
IS MAKING ITS MARK**

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Andy's Seasoning Is Making Its Mark

By Malaika Horne

Tall and stately, Katherine Anderson, president of Andy's Seasoning, Inc., presides over a growing business enterprise. The company manufactures, distributes and markets food preparation in its recently expanded 27,000 square foot facility, 2829 Chouteau, just west of the Lafayette Square neighborhood.

Recently at the City of St. Louis Business Celebration Luncheon, Anderson received an award as one of the Businesses of the Year, alongside such stalwarts as Bissinger's Handicraft Chocolatier, Macy's (formerly Famous-Barr), Mike Shannon's Steaks and Seafood and fairly new arrivals such as the posh restaurant, Eleven Eleven Mississippi.

The award was presented to companies that make "special commit-

ments or investments in the city," including job creation, job retention and capital investment. They were also recognized for diversity initiatives. When Andy's Seasoning recently expanded, it increased its ethnically diverse employees -- with a good representation of women -- from 32 to 39.

Anderson cuts an imposing, no-nonsense figure, yet exudes graciousness and charm. She spoke softly in a rather dispassionate tone about her experiences living in the segregated South. Born in Osceola, Arkansas to



Mayor Francis Slay and Katherine Anderson

William Lee and Odessa Jones Lee, she is the oldest of eleven children, six boys and five girls. (Osceola is named after Native American, Chief Osceola, she said.)

The business doyenne relayed an inspirational story of high achievers, who made it when Jim Crow, a legally sanctioned system of racial discrimination, was the order of the day. She had to leave Osceola to go to boarding school because no high school in the area would allow African Americans to attend. She then went to Mississippi Industrial College.

Despite an often-hostile environment, her father's work ethic instilled strong values and dogged determinism. She remembers him saying: "The world doesn't owe you anything—you have to work for what you get." Her mother's nurturing ways and virtues emphasized etiquette and manners. "She taught us table manners, how to walk, how to sit and corrected our English," she said.

Reared on a farm, her father raised cotton, corn, soybean, wheat, and other crops as well as livestock -- cattle and pigs. All the brood of children worked the farm. Hence, she acquired her entrepreneurial spirit honest. Anderson said it was not just her family

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who influenced her; she grew up in a community that valued success. Many of her contemporaries became lawyers, doctors, teachers and politicians.

Seven of her siblings are still living. One brother is a FBI agent, one works for the U.S. Postal Service, five of her brothers served in the military, two in the Air Force and three in the Navy. She had a sister, now deceased, who was a teacher in Chicago, a sister who works for the Postal Service in Cleveland and two sisters living in St. Louis, one is working for the Postal Service and the other is retired from State Hospital. Her youngest brother was the first allowed to go to school near their hometown. He went to Keiser High School in Keiser, Arkansas and became the first Black to play on the football team.

But being first is not new to this family. They are descendants of Hiram Revels, elected 1870 in Mississippi as the first Black U.S. Senator,

replacing Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy during the Civil War. Revels had served as state senator and when there was a vacancy, he was appointed U.S. Senator. Among his important votes was a change in the naturalization law striking out the word "white."

The struggles of people of color and women to enter the mainstream of American life, particularly business, are telling signs of the fits and starts, of action and inaction, toward fairness and equality. When Senator Revels cast that fateful vote more than 135 years ago, little did he know that it would take a protracted struggle to embrace genuine equality. Nonetheless, his progeny are sterling examples of his historical blow against a well-entrenched system.

Anderson's legacy is unquestionably rich and strong, yet she has not forgotten where she came from. She is socially active and committed to vari-

ous causes, from the United Way to battling AIDS. She also has feminist leanings, meaning she believes that women are equal to men. Because she is an elder African American, some may think she does not value feminism. But this is far from the case.

When asked 'Are you a feminist?' She responded with certainty -- a definitive yes. "We (women) do need rights," she said, adding that while gender bias is a major barrier, Black women have often had more freedom than their husbands. "Many times Black men were pushed into the background, dating back to slavery and Black women were treated with more respect."

As author Deborah Gray White noted in *Arn't I a Woman?* -- "Marriage did not translate (for Black women) into protection and security." To wit: Black women are less dependent on men. This is not to say that Black women enjoyed more privileges



Schnucks Salutes Katherine Anderson, President of Andy's Seasoning!

Congratulations on your Spirit Award from St. Louis Mayor Francis G. Slay and on being named 2006 Entrepreneur of the Year by the St. Louis American Foundation.

We also want to recognize Andy's Seasoning's 25th Anniversary. Your commitment to quality, the entrepreneurial spirit and to the community are known throughout the St. Louis metro area. We wish you many years of continued success!

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— quite the contrary. But they've had to shoulder more of the responsibilities of family life and wage earner. Put another way, the triple oppression of race, class and gender have put them in a peculiar situation. Hence, Anderson's intrepid spirit to succeed despite the odds is not unusual.

In April, the company completed its new addition, doubling in size, celebrating 25 years in business. It includes tasteful well-appointed offices, buffed floors and gleaming glass doors, symbolizing the success that hard work, ingenuity and timing can bring. Etched on the glass double-doors of the conference room is the company name and logo, a representation of the famous Texas longhorn.

"My husband was a true Texan," she proudly said. Pointing to his photo in her spacious office, he is nattily attired in a white suit, wearing a white ten-gallon looking Texas hat. Reuben (Andy) Anderson was born in Longview, Texas. They married in 1970. She co-founded the company named after him and ran it with him until 1989, then took over after his death in 1996. The, family-owned business includes her three sons, Larry Lee, Roy Lee and Michael Lee. All her sons are actively involved.

Today it is a thriving multi-million dollar operation of high-quality, reasonably priced chicken breeding, fish breeding, seasoning condiments and new vegetable and tempura seafood batter. Their seasoning products are made from a unique blend of herbs and spices for fish, pork, beef and chicken. Products are in stores in major cities throughout the country and in every state. It also does business with food giants such as Tyson Foods and Keystone Foods.

Outside in the rear of the industrially modern facility are two giant silos of flour and trucking rigs, reflecting the magnitude of the operation. On the inside, employees with forklifts are moving large shipments. Others

in all-white uniforms are working in the processing part of the plant, packaging the product, heads covered in white (shower cap looking) cloth caps, noses covered with masks. There is a quality control section and a research and development lab. There are front office personnel and others in middle and upper management.

The business began almost as a fluke while entertaining in their home. "When we barbecued, people used to ask: who made this sauce? My husband would take the credit because he would go behind me and add more spices." To say the least, it was mouth-watering delicious. She said friends and relatives loved their barbecue sauce so much, they would say, "You ought to put this on the market." Hence, they were inspired by others' prompting to take their culinary talents more seriously — and so they did.

The couple started making samples, taking it to their jobs to get feedback. Then they started taking samples to local grocery stores and they liked it. But there was a hitch: they could only make sauce in a five-gallon vat. Her husband's brother, a food chemist, showed them how to make it in larger quantities. Then they started making barbecue sauce 25 gallons at a time.

In 1981, the company incorporated, growing from a small, two-product home-based business to a nationally known firm. Although they initially made barbecue sauce, now only dry products are produced. So what happened to the sauce? The one that everyone said was to die for.

The story goes like this: They started off in a small operation at 1931 Washington where the barbecue sauce was made. However OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration), the federal agency charged with safe and health work environments,



developed a whole new set of rules for dry blends and wet blends. The OSHA regulations also required separate facilities for the two. They tried for a while to operate two facilities, one for dry blends and one for wet blends, but they had insufficient managerial personnel to oversee the Washington plant. She said it became more profitable to stick with dry blends. So in 1990, they made the difficult decision to end production of Andy's Barbecue Sauce. Nevertheless, the decision to stop producing their signature product didn't impede their progress for long.

In 1987, they began construction on Chouteau, moving there in 1988.

This year on November 9th, she received the Salute to Excellence Business Entrepreneur of the Year Award presented by the St. Louis American Foundation, St. Louis Regional Chamber & Growth Association and the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis.

Andy's Seasoning is a company led by a woman who started making barbecue sauce in the basement of her home with her husband. Now the company is making its mark in a fiercely competitive and frequently volatile business environment. Since its expansion, she said the goal is to grow the company, to produce more products and to double sales. Little did they know on those balmy days of cookouts that they'd be where they are today.

Senator Revels should be smiling about now.

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