



ON THE FRONT COVER

ANNE GIARDINI

By Thomas S. Woods

Few writing assignments have given me more pleasure, and at the same time filled me with more trepidation, than that of attempting to capture, in 1,500 words (more or less), the remarkable character, attributes and achievements of Anne Giardini, B.A. (SFU), LL.B. (Brit. Col.), LL.M. (Cantab.).

The assignment is a pleasure because—as everyone who knows her will tell you—*Anne* is a pleasure, in every sense, to know. She is a kind, articulate, energetic, decisive, confident, intellectually rigorous, highly principled, sometimes-irreverent, amazingly talented, wickedly funny and much-loved friend and colleague.

She also throws an amazing dinner party.

The assignment fills me with trepidation, though, because to survey properly all that Anne is and does in so little space sets me an almost impossible task.

But I remind myself that Anne is, herself, a diminutive figure—at least in physical stature. Much is concentrated into that small frame. This provides a salutary reminder of the axiom “less is often (if not usually) more”, which axiom I must apply without further complaint to the writing of this brief biography. Jane Austen—in whom Anne has a serious, scholarly interest—once referred to her own novels as being “etchings on a square inch of ivory”, to be contrasted with canvases that dominate a room. Think of this profile as the square inch of ivory allotted me and onto which I shall do my best to etch the most important details of a remarkable career in a seemingly unstoppable ascendancy.

Placing the emphasis where I believe it belongs, I will first say that there is one thing that emerged repeatedly in the discussions I have had with

those who know Anne as a lawyer and business executive. It is that—beyond being admired and respected—she is deeply and abidingly loved. Yes, *loved*. I'll venture that business people and lawyers don't often use that word to describe their responses to those with whom they deal, either as allies or as adversaries, in the tough worlds of commerce and commercial law. Anne's humanity, integrity and empathetic nature inspire affection from people seldom given to such effusions.

Anne's life is breathtakingly, inspiringly and refreshingly multi-dimensional. Her intelligence and industry are rooted in, and engaged with, a wide spectrum of disparate interests and endeavours that she pursues with determination and skill. She is no dilettante; neither is she a "brain on a stick". Yes, she reads the "Report on Business" section of the newspaper, but she reads the reviews, arts and commentary sections too. She reads novels. And short stories. And legal and economic treatises. And poetry. And the *American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots*.

Anne is blessed with a practical outlook, a kindly nature and a deep reservoir of common sense. These attributes and her broad perspective serve to leaven her intellectual acuity and legal/business acumen. If the expression were not so tired and hackneyed, I would say she is a "Renaissance woman". A better phrase might be "well rounded and well grounded".

I shall sketch out some detail further on, but know now that she wears, in addition to numerous other hats, the following (listed in no particular order):

- President, and former vice-president and general counsel, of Weyerhaeuser Company Limited, the Canadian subsidiary of Weyerhaeuser Company—one of the world's largest integrated forest products companies;
- Wife of Tony Giardini, a chartered accountant and CFO of a prominent international mining company;
- Mother of Joseph (a student at McGill) and Nicholas and Sofia (both still living at home and attending high school);
- Author of fiction and non-fiction, including short stories, essays and three novels—*The Sad Truth About Happiness* (HarperCollins, 2005), *Advice for Italian Boys* (HarperCollins, 2009) and *Anguish Pie* (a work in progress);
- Author and co-author of articles and chapters on legal subject matter including, most recently, chapters in *Canadian Legal Practice: A Guide for the 21st Century* (Lexis/Nexis, 2009) and *Aboriginal Law: Developments Since Delgamuukw* (Canada Law Book, 2009);

- Jane Austen scholar, and presenter and panelist, at periodic meetings of the Jane Austen Society of North America;
- Manager of a Thunderbirds minor hockey team, 2003–2008;
- Planning committee member (2005–2007) and chair (2007–2008) for the Vancouver YWCA Women of Distinction Awards;
- Member of the board of the Forest Products Association of Canada (“FPAC”) and chair of the FPAC Aboriginal Relations Committee;
- Member of the Law Society of British Columbia’s Retention of Women in the Law Task Force, 2008 to the present;
- Chair and director of the Vancouver International Writers and Readers Festival, and frequent host, panelist, presenter and facilitator at its festivals since 2005;
- Director of the Writers’ Trust of Canada, 2007 to the present;
- Vice-chair of the board of Knox United Church, 2001–2009; and
- Member of the judging panel for the *Advocate* Short Fiction Competition, 2006 to the present.

Alex Shorten, now senior vice-president and general counsel for Imperial Parking Corporation and Anne’s former colleague at Weyerhaeuser, moved heaven and earth to recruit her as a contract lawyer in 1994. Anne’s talents quickly shone through. Not long into the position, she became pregnant with Sofia and, somewhat gingerly, raised the subject of a maternity leave. Alex’s response was to congratulate her, saying something like “I don’t think that’s a terminal condition.” A progressive thinker and a good judge of human capital, he wasn’t about to let this one slip away. His assessment was proven sound. About the woman who, 14 years later, became Weyerhaeuser’s president, Alex has said this:

Each day of her life, Anne has always found a way to accomplish the many tasks at hand, as a student, as a lawyer, a writer, a mom, a coach, a mentor, a daughter, a wife, a friend and now as a business executive. Nothing cannot be overcome. Nothing is a barrier.

Anna Fung, Q.C., former president of the Law Society of British Columbia and senior counsel with Intrawest ULC, was a classmate of Anne’s at the UBC Faculty of Law and then clerked with Anne at the B.C. Court of Appeal in 1984–85. They have pursued similar career paths in that they both articulated at downtown firms and eventually took in-house positions with large corporations. Anna and Anne have been close friends for almost 30 years, and Anna describes Anne as a “loyal supporter” and a “talented and first-rate lawyer” whom she is proud to call her friend. About the subjects of Tony, hockey and the arts she says:

I remember Anne lamenting to me when she first started dating her husband Tony that she couldn't see herself in a long-term relationship with someone who loved hockey and who didn't care all that much for the arts. Now, she attends her children's hockey games and cheers them on from the stands while she is busily working away on her laptop on her latest novel or closing a deal. Perhaps to her own surprise, she is and has been the manager of a Thunderbird minor hockey team since 2003.

Barbara Buchanan, the conduct and ethics practice adviser with the Law Society of British Columbia, first met Anne through a small group of women lawyers practising forestry law that Anne named the "Forestry Broads Group". She reports that the friendship grew from there to include membership in the same book club and this "unorthodox" ecumenical initiative:

Anne has been on the board of her church and I am a board chair for a synagogue, so it's been interesting comparing how we perform these roles. When her Christian church had a Passover Seder she invited me as the token Jew.

Anne's friend Maureen Palmer, an independent documentary filmmaker, offers this pithy description of what the two discuss when out together walking Maureen's dog:

On those walks, our conversations can bounce from how to sustain a long marriage, to coming up with the Top Ten Characteristics of Successful People (we agree on resiliency), to carbon sequestering, to methods of forestalling the inevitable "saggy mummy butt".

I would be shortchanging Anne badly if I did not say more about the remarkable, global reception her novels have received among the *literati*. *The Sad Truth About Happiness* was published in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia in the spring of 2005. It was a finalist for the Amazon/Books in Canada First Novel Award in 2006. The novel drew high praise from reviewers around the world. In *Newsweek*, a reviewer observed:

Giardini appreciates the difference between happy enough and deeper satisfaction and parses these nuances with an appealing light touch.

By the time this issue of the *Advocate* reaches its readers, Anne's second novel—*Advice for Italian Boys*—will have been released in Canada and will be in your local independent bookstore (and those other ones too, if you must). If the early reviews of pre-production proofs are any indication, she need not fear the dreaded "second novel syndrome". In *Quill and Quire*—one of Canada's leading journals of the book arts—the new novel is described as being "a pleasure to read, with an abundance of lush imagery and a range of fully fleshed characters".

While she has consistently made her way forward as a writer of literary fiction on the strength of her own work, undoubtedly some of her writing

talents and gifts have descended to her through a precious lineage. Being the daughter of the late, much-missed and archetypal Canadian writer and novelist Carol Shields, she enjoyed a childhood steeped in the wonder and mystery of words.

I will end this appreciation of Anne Giardini (for that is truly what it is) with two quotations. I asked Anne for a favoured line from the writings of an author she admires. She came back to me with this, penned by Anne Lamott:

I do not at all understand the mystery of grace—only that it meets us where we are but does not leave us where it found us.

That remarkable, and remarkably expressed, thought deserves to be left hanging delicately in the air, without further comment or elaboration.

The second quotation is, in fact, an entire short poem written about Anne by her mother, Carol Shields, and published in *Others* (Borealis Press, 1972). I am indebted to Anne's rather proud father, Don, who sent it to me in answer to my solicitation for material to assist in preparing this profile.

ANNE AT THE SYMPHONY

She listens like someone submitting
to surgery;
and at twelve she's quiet
under the knife,

stilled in ether, permitting
an alien clarinet
to scoop out an injury
we can't even imagine.

Jittery violins
devise a cure
and the vinegar pure
flutes doodle a theory
of life

which dissolves in
a memory of a memory
and bleeds like sand
through her faintly
clapping hands.

Look and listen closely and you will see and hear in her mother's carefully formed phrases the one, in vestigial form, who one day would become the president of Weyerhaeuser and so much more.

