
- Advertisement -

Paul (PK) Kennedy, longtime retail executive, was 71

October 19, 2020

Paul J. Kennedy, a longtime retail executive who worked for nearly three decades at Star Market and its parent, American Stores, during a 45-year career, died Oct. 13 from complications of liver and kidney failure. He was 71.



Paul J. Kennedy

Mr. Kennedy, who was better known as P.K., started his career with Star Market in 1965 as a produce clerk and during the next 29 years was promoted through the ranks, ultimately rising to vice president of sales and marketing by 1994.

In 1994, Mr. Kennedy relocated to Salt Lake City and was named vice president of corporate brand marketing for Star Market's parent American Stores, and was appointed vice president of perishable procurement three years later. He subsequently moved to Pittsburgh to work for Supervalu as vice president of sales and merchandising.

In 2002, Mr. Kennedy relocated to Des Moines, WA, where he worked for Associated Grocers of Seattle as vice president of perishable sales and procurement. In the latter days of his career, he was vice president of perishables for Winn-Dixie Stores in Jacksonville, FL, and a member of the board of directors for Category Partners LLC in Denver.

Mike Krage, retail promotion director- Northeast for the Idaho Potato Commission, who worked for Mr. Kennedy earlier in his career, considered him a mentor and recalled his driven approach to retailing.

"P.K. came to Associated Grocers in Seattle in 2002, and I worked under him for about two years," said Krage. "He was the most strategic thinker I have ever worked with, and he was known for having a very aggressive approach to fresh merchandising. He taught me more in two years than I had learned in the previous 20."

Krage also worked with Mr. Kennedy at Winn-Dixie Stores in Jacksonville, FL, and recalled him helping to lead the company out of bankruptcy with his aggressive merchandising tactics.

"When Winn-Dixie filed for bankruptcy protection in around 2005, we were going through a difficult time with suppliers, who were understandably hesitant to send product to the stores, more so on the

grocery side of the business,” said Krage. “But we had strong relationships with our produce suppliers, plus they had added protection under the PACA, so we were able to continue getting produce supplies. P.K. implemented extremely aggressive promotions, like apples for 10 cents a pound and bananas for five cents apiece. In fact, our ad circulars were entirely devoted to produce. It took about eight weeks, but people started coming back to the stores, and that was a key reason why Winn-Dixie was able to emerge from bankruptcy.”

That same year, Krage said Mr. Kennedy’s “Best in Fresh” strategy, which had elevated the retailer’s produce program was deemed so successful that it was adopted across all other fresh departments.

Mr. Kennedy retired in 2009 and enjoyed taking cruises to the Caribbean and Europe in retirement with his wife, Debra, who survives him.

A wake was scheduled for Oct. 19 in his hometown of Somerville, MA, with funeral services to take place Oct. 20. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Mr. Kennedy’s memory to the American Liver Foundation, at <https://liverfoundation.org>, or please plant a tree in his memory.

[Print](#)