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Myra Gordon did a little bit of everything at the Hunts Point Produce Market

By

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A woman's work is never done. Just ask Myra Gordon. But that's never bothered her. In fact, she thrives in a busy work environment. After all, one has to when they spend 35 years working at the Hunts Point Produce Market in the Bronx, NY.

"I originally started working part-time at the Hunts Point Market in 1986," she shared with *The Produce News*. Her youngest daughter at the time was still at home, and she noted how important it was for her to balance her work and family life while raising kids. In 1988, Gordon began working full-time at the market, and hasn't looked back since.

"I was never a clock-watcher," she said. "I paid no attention to hours. I got done what I needed to get done. It was a labor of love."



Myra Gordon, retired Hunts Point

Produce Market executive director (center), with Gabriela D'Arrigo of D'Arrigo New York and Sasha LoPresti of Trucco at the Hunts Point Produce Market in the Bronx, NY. Photo by Odette Scofield, originally published by the Bronx Times.

A labor of love, indeed. One that she's sad to leave behind, but knows it's the right time. Gordon hung up her hat as executive director of the Hunts Point Produce Market at the end of July, and already misses the energy of the people she worked with.

"It was a pleasure to be able to step up to the plate," she shared. "I miss my staff. I worked very closely with those men and women for many years. I really appreciated the help they gave me."

As executive director of the market, Gordon had her "fingers in everything," she said. "The work just sort of grew exponentially as different things came up."

Gordon had a background in public relations, which she quickly put to use at the Hunts Point Produce Market. She recalled organizing a give-back event for Thanksgiving. "It came to me and I ran with it," she said. "The lines were huge. We packed 2,000 bags with enough food to feed a family of four for Thanksgiving."

Over the course of her career at Hunts Point, Gordon attended meetings at the lobbyist's office; handled all public relations for the market; ran annual budget and cooperative meetings; was instrumental in starting a Worker's Compensation Safety Group; was a trustee of two Union locals; and organized tours with colleges, such as Cornell University, Ohio University, and Texas University — among many other duties.

"I would point out the value of using the market, learning how it works, what the importance is, bring them into the board room and answer their questions and then ask them some questions of my own," she said about the college tours. "I enjoyed that thoroughly, I really did."

Another aspect of her job that she came to love (like a true boss), was handling the lawsuits.

"I handled all of the lawsuits, whether they really occurred or didn't occur," she remarked. "I had a fabulous attorney who's still with the market. I did all the research. I always listened to the plaintiff first. I sat through all the negotiations and all the settlements. There were many over the course of the years — some legitimate, some we had no proof of. That I enjoyed."

While there wasn't a particular moment that stands out in her mind as being her favorite from over the years, Gordon said the one thing that will always stick with her from her time at the market is that she, a female, was hired and welcomed with open arms.

"It was a very unique environment for a woman to work in and be accepted the way I was," she shared. "The older generation took me under their wing. Everyone sort of protected me in a way, which was interesting."

As for advice to other women looking to make their mark on this world, Gordon says, "Don't try to be a man. Don't let your ego get in the way. Be yourself, do your job, give it your all and don't always expect a thank you. You know within yourself whether or not you're doing a good job."

Gordon attributes much of her work ethic and success to simply keeping up with the crowd at the market. She noted that the companies that do business on Hunts Point are the most generous, hard-working group of people she has ever come across.

"I never felt like I could work less than they did," she said. "That was always my mindset. When they work that hard, I have to work equally as hard for them. It was absolutely and truly a special place to work."

Those who had the opportunity to work with Gordon have nothing but admiration and respect for her as well.

"I am certain when I say this, Myra Gordon is the only person who could have created, developed and maintained the job she did here for this market in the way she did," said Gabriela D'Arrigo, vice president of marketing and communications for D'Arrigo New York on the Hunts Point Produce Market. "She is one of the hardest working people I know and she has this grace about her where she makes it all look easy. At any given moment she has roughly 100 irons in the fire and you would never know it."

D'Arrigo is among the younger generation at the Hunts Point Market, whose family has been doing business there for many, many years. Around five or six years ago, Gordon decided to bring the younger generation of Hunts Point workers together, forming what she called the "Next Gen" group.

“I felt that it was time for them to all meet each other and get their feet wet in learning how to maneuver in the market,” Gordon said. “They are now the young power folks representing their companies, taking over PR, public speaking, the NY Produce Show and Conference, and more. I am proud of that!”

Gordon’s commitment to empowering the next generation at Hunts Point certainly left an impression on D’Arrigo.

“She is warm, caring and approachable but don’t mistake her kindness for weakness. She can be as tough as nails if need be,” D’Arrigo noted. “This market already misses her immensely and I definitely miss her presence here. She was someone I sought for guidance regularly and always put the market and its vendors first. She is a mentor and a dear friend and I am so fortunate to have gotten the opportunity to work with her.”

Although Gordon’s time at Hunts Point has come to an end, don’t think that means her work in the produce industry is over — far from it. Gordon plans to continue her legacy by helping with the New York Produce Show and Conference.

As her mantra goes: “When a task has once begun, never leave it until it’s done. Be the labor great or small, do it well or not at all.”

Top photo: Myra Gordon (fourth from right), retired executive director of the Hunts Point Produce Market, flanked by many volunteers at a Hunts Point Gives Back event in 2016.

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