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Jeff Young, veteran Hunts Point sales star, dies at 62

By

Tim Linden

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John Jeffrey Young, known as Jeff Young during his four-decade career in the produce industry, died April 1, at the age of 62.

Mr. Young studied business administration and marketing at William Paterson University, a New Jersey public university, receiving a bachelor's degree. He got his start in the produce business in 1987 through his cousin Bob Johnson, who founded Johnson and Sbrocco International, now Johnson Associated Fruit Co. He remained at that company for a decade before joining A&J Produce on the Hunts Point Terminal Market in 1997, which is where he remained until his death. His specialty was buying and selling citrus and stone fruit. His colleagues considered him an expert in these areas.



Jeff Young

(second from left) with Jason Weiler, Joey Joseph and Victor Joseph at an EPC MetLife Event.

A&J reported that Mr. Young collaborated closely with Sunkist during his career, playing a key role in helping A&J earn the prestigious Sunkist Million Dollar Club award, a recognition they've proudly received for more than two decades.

The company released a statement praising Mr. Young's work and his dedication to the wholesaler, calling him "a consummate professional who dedicated 28 years of his life to A&J Produce Corp. Jeff was not only a valued colleague but a trusted friend, and he will be missed dearly by all of us," said the statement. "Throughout his career, Jeff's extensive knowledge, experience, and skill were evident in everything he did, from managing relationships with both shippers and customers to his unwavering commitment to excellence. His dedication to the company and willingness to always go the extra mile made him a standout representative of A&J. His daily efforts were integral to our success, and his contributions will be hard to replace. Our heartfelt condolences go out to Jeff's wife, Connie, and his daughters, Cassidy and Jillian, during this difficult time. Jeff's legacy will continue to inspire all of us at A&J."

Mr. Young was well-known in the produce industry as a frequent attendee of trade shows, constantly working to strengthen and maintain relationships with growers, shippers, and customers. He played an active role as a member of the Eastern Produce Council and the International Fresh Produce Association, regularly participating in their events and trade shows.

"Jeff was deeply committed to investing his time and efforts in shaping future generations," said Stephanie Tramutola of A&J. "He was always eager to lend a helping hand, paving the way for a brighter future not only for A&J, but also for the industry as a whole."



Joey

Joseph, James Tramutola and Jeff Young at an EPC BBQ.

Relaying how everyone in the A&J office felt about Mr. Young, she said "he wore many hats — he was our doctor, stockbroker, newscaster, colleague and friend. Anytime we needed anything, we went to Jeff. He knew everything about what was going on here at A&J and outside. His wisdom and guidance were a constant source of support. Whether we needed professional advice or just a

friendly ear, Jeff was always there. His kindness, generosity, and humor made him more than just a colleague — he was truly a part of the family.”

Outside of work, Mr. Young had a wide range of interests with his wife and daughters heading the list. He loved people and enjoyed chit-chatting and interacting with others, according to all who knew him. He was an active member of his church and volunteered both in and outside of work. He also loved the Rolling Stones.

He is survived by his wife Constance (Connie), and two daughters: Jillian (son-in-law Naro), and Cassidy. Mr. Young is also survived by two brother, Matt and Cliff. His brother Russell preceded him in death. He also has members of his extended family working at the Johnson Association Fruit Co. (JAFCO).

Many industry members reached out to A&J to offer their condolences and comments. Included here are excerpts from some of those folks.

“Jeff Young was an outstanding person to do business with on a daily basis. He was thoughtful, fair, and understood the grower side as well as the wholesale business. I was fortunate to work with Jeff for over 20 years, and he will be sorely missed,” said Barney Evans of Sun Pacific Marketing.

“I have known Jeff since I began my produce career 30 years ago. He was always genuinely interested in everything that was going on with me and my family and I feel extremely lucky that I was able to spend so many good times with him throughout the years. The produce industry has lost a legend, and I have lost a friend,” said David Haller of Classic Harvest.

“Jeff Young was a true friend and partner to Sunkist and all of our growers during his time with A&J. He had an in-depth knowledge of the citrus industry and an innate ability to read markets and trends, thus always putting his company in a strong position. His gregarious personality made every sales transaction an adventure and his storytelling abilities are legendary,” Brad Blaine of Sunkist Growers Inc.

“Jeff Young was a great person to work with on stone fruit. His knowledge of the produce industry was second to none and I appreciated his expertise and perspective over the 14 years we worked together. He was a dear friend of mine and will be sincerely missed,” said Miguel Beltran of Giumarra.

Bob Johnson of JAFCO Inc. who gave Mr. Young his start in the business had this to say: “The news

of Jeff Young's passing is heartbreaking. Jeff was an energetic person and a pleasure to be around. I introduced Jeff to the produce business in 1987. He became an excellent buyer and seller and thrived in the business. It is very hard to process this news. My family and JAFCO will miss him dearly and we will honor his legacy forever."

"Jeff Young left an indelible mark on A&J Produce and myself over his more than 30 years working in the produce industry. I worked side-by-side with Jeff for almost two decades and I can honestly say I have never met anyone more passionate, diligent and dedicated as Jeff," said Jason Weiler of J STAR Produce.

"For 14 years, I had the privilege of working alongside him every single day. He taught me so much about the produce business, but more importantly, he showed me the value of building genuine connections," said James Tramutola of A&J Produce Corp. "His passion for what he did was undeniable, and he made the work feel easier simply by being himself. Jeff was also an incredible storyteller. He had a way of turning even the most routine conversations into something memorable. Beyond work, Jeff was a devoted family man. He spoke with so much pride about his wife, Connie, and their daughters, Cassidy and Jillian. He never forgot a face, a story, or a detail about anyone he met. Walking through a convention with him was like accompanying a celebrity — he couldn't go more than a few steps without running into someone he knew. And the remarkable part was, he always remembered everything about them."

Victor Joseph of Victor Joseph & Son Inc. remembered Mr. Young's devotion to his family. "Jeff Young was first and foremost a great husband, and a very proud father to his daughters and his son-in-law. His family was without a doubt his No. 1 priority. He spoke about them all the time and bragged in a most humble fashion. Jeff also loved our industry. He was proud of the fact that he worked for A&J Produce and cherished the strong business relationships and friendships he developed over his 35-plus years. He was one of the really good people on this earth."

"Jeff played such an important role in the long history our organization has had with A&J. Everyone who worked with Jeff truly adored him; he was full of life. I enjoyed speaking with Jeff every day and will remember him for his knowledge, fairness, upbeat personality and true loyalty," said Brian Schiro of Jac. Vandenberg, Inc.

"Jeff has been a constant in my life for the past nine years; he normally is the first person I talk to in the morning giving him the rundown on what's available and in return Jeff would give me details about what's happening in the overall market. At first this was just a standard interaction between a buyer and a salesperson. As the years past and our personal relationship grew, the conversations soon started to be about family. Jeff to me was steady and I looked up to him. He handled his business with the utmost professionalism," said Evan Myers, of Forever Fresh.

Myra Gordon, an A&J Consultant, and longtime presence at Hunts Point, spoke of 35 years calling him a friend. "Jeff, when you got to know him, was a funny man. I spent time with Jeff at The Eastern Produce Council's Dinner Gala every year. Everyone in attendance came to chat with Jeff. On the phone it was obvious from his conversations that the knowledge he provided about quality, pricing and availability of the items came from a straight talker. It was obvious from his conversations that not only was he highly respected, but he was well liked by all who had dealings with him."

[Tim Linden](#)

About Tim Linden |

Tim Linden grew up in a produce family as both his father and grandfather spent their business careers on the wholesale terminal markets in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Tim graduated from San Diego State University in 1974 with a degree in journalism. Shortly thereafter he began his career at The Packer where he stayed for eight years, leaving in 1983 to join Western Growers as editor of its monthly magazine. In 1986, Tim launched Champ Publishing as an agricultural publishing specialty company.

Today he is a contract publisher for several trade associations and writes extensively on all aspects of the produce business. He began writing for The Produce News in 1997, and currently wears the title of Editor at Large.

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