



Marriage to a Produce Man

It has always been a particular strength of PRODUCE BUSINESS that the people behind the publication are the same people who dreamt it, launched it and have sweated out the building process all during the past fourteen years. The issue you hold in your hands is a special one. PRODUCE BUSINESS was launched at the PMA convention in San Francisco in 1985, so with this issue we celebrate a birthday, an anniversary, a milestone.

Personally, I have a great deal to be thankful for this year. On September 5, 1999, a young maiden elected a life of consternation. She married me.

I didn't have all that much choice in the matter. I grabbed the one willing to have me. How many women are actually willing to hold off on a swanky dinner so we can check out the produce department in the supermarket on the way? Well, Debbie has managed to find my need to explore supermarket produce departments endearing — she even shot the video at the Safeway on Kauai during the honeymoon.

Normally PRODUCE BUSINESS is, of course, all business. We use every inch of every page to help people do business better. Marketing, merchandising, management and procurement are what we are about and we deal with these issues in every edition.

But a trade is more than some abstract thing called business — a trade is composed of people. And if PRODUCE BUSINESS is directed at the business side of life, surely understanding the reality of business is informed by an understanding of the pressures and promise of each industry participant's private life.

This notion of an industry as an organism — living, breathing, changing, transforming before our very eyes — is what has always

informed PRODUCE BUSINESS.

Debbie never knew my grandfather, but the man Debbie chose to marry had his business values established sitting at the Prevor holiday table listening to my father, my uncles and my grandfather discuss the produce business.

Debbie doesn't know it, but these produce industry values are in no small part why she married me. Because growing up in a produce family teaches some useful lessons:

Forthrightness

I was taught that a man's word matters. My grandfather said that every time he did a joint venture or a partnership, the partner always wanted to put the Prevor name first, because my grandfather's name was solid. He did what he said he would. In the produce industry, where fast decisions have always had to be made without the benefit of formal contracts, a good name is worth more than money.

Empathy

I learned that one shouldn't take unfair advantage of another's distress. In the produce trade there are always problems — loads come in frozen or out of grade, and the rules, PACA and the like always have some available option which will ruin the shipper or receiver if exercised. Almost always, there is another way that can salvage real value for someone. I learned that people want not just the best deal, but the best partner in case things go wrong.

Necessity

I learned that nature's creations all have their own demands, and so when the produce is ready, it has to be tended to. We used to import a lot of counter-seasonal produce and during those times of year everyone worked

round the clock because the nature of things required it.

Work

My father was up before dawn to walk the market and, as a boy, I waited up late to have dinner with him. It was always clear that worthwhile things come about as a result of effort.

Perishability

The most luscious fruit needs to be cared for properly and enjoyed while ripe.

These rules were never laid down but they were internalized long before I gave much thought to any girls.

Now, fresh from tying the knot in a mighty public way, I look at these rules for success in the produce industry and I think they are a pretty good guide to success in a marriage: Be honest, understand and care for your spouse's feelings, do what has to be done to make it work, understand that it won't always be easy — worthwhile things rarely are — treat one's spouse with proper care and handling... and don't forget to enjoy the sweetness.

Mrs. Prevor (no Mom, not you!) will be at the PMA and if you are in Atlanta, both Debbie and I hope you'll come by the booth (Number 1200) and introduce yourself. It's the 14th anniversary of a magazine and the not quite two-month anniversary of a marriage. Both have been a genuine blast so far, and both hold so much promise for the future.

Thanks for being part of the PRODUCE BUSINESS family.