

Jack J. Marchese

January 17, 1920 – August 13, 2002

Jack Marchese, known as Jake to family, friends and the community, was a strong presence in Milwaukee's third ward business district. He grew up listening to his father Vito explain the virtues of the produce they delivered to mom-and-pop grocery stores throughout the city. Upon his father's death, he proudly took over V. Marchese Produce; a family owned business delivering fresh produce to grocery stores, and later expanded the business to include hotels, restaurants and other commercial businesses. He and his brother, Carlo, incorporated the family business in 1972. Jack was instrumental in the creation of the company's widely recognized logo, a bright yellow banana with dark curly hair and a handle bar mustache, that is still painted on all company trucks today. He also adopted his dad's well-known phrase "Fresha? You betcha!" as the company slogan.

Jack was very dedicated and never retired from the family business, waking up at 4 a.m., seven days a week to go to work. In fact, he only slowed down during the last couple of years of his life due to health problems. He used to sing as he drove the truck, waving his hands to passers by. He was also known as the "Banana Man" to the neighborhood children, to whom he gave free bananas and rides on his truck. Jack loved his work and left a lasting impression with those he met. Jack also loved his country and Milwaukee, where he thought the family business should remain. He grew up across the street from the first location at the business warehouse on Chicago Street. His sons, Jack and Sal, and his grandson, Jack Wertz, took over the business in July 1993 and continue to run the business today.

Jack was a dedicated husband of sixty years to Grace Marchese, a loving father to five children, and beloved grandfather to 15 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren. Jack was active throughout Milwaukee. He loved going to various city festivals; Festa Italiana was his favorite. Jack was also involved in the Holy Cross Church Holy Name Ushers Society for 50 years and was a member of the Italian Community Center.

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