



Nancy Becker and Randy Gordon are pictured at the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce offices at the One World Trade Center complex in Downtown Long Beach. The two met at a 1999 chamber event and have been together ever since. (Business Journal photograph by Matt Fukushima)

From A Texas Cotton Farm To The Long Beach Chamber – Randy Gordon’s Early Life And Career

■ By SAMANTHA MEHLINGER
EDITOR

Asked to tell his life story and to start from the beginning, Randy Gordon, 25-year president and chief executive officer of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, says with a perfectly straight face: “I was born upside down and naked in Lubbock, Texas.” This is usually how people are born, he notes, his tone twinkling with the implication of a wink, though one does not actually cross his face.

The son of a cotton farmer, “I grew up chopping cotton, planting it, hoeing the weeds, and picking it,” Gordon recalls. “And if someone said, ‘Can you describe an acre of land?’ I’d say, ‘Sure, it’s 12 rows of cotton a quarter mile long.’” Working the fields, and then later at his father’s next venture, a Phillips 66 gas station in Idalou, Texas, instilled a strong work ethic in Gordon at a young age. “I remember gas was about 19 cents a gallon. And sometimes it went down to 9 cents on a gas war.”

So how did a Texan cotton farmer end up as the head of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce? Gordon’s path wound through various sectors of the business world and varying levels of management in smaller cities and ventures before he landed in what would become his decades-long home.

Right out of high school, Gordon moved with his parents and two brothers to California. “My uncle was a bigshot with North American Rockwell, which had about 40,000 employees in Downey at the time,” he says, adding that his father took a job with McDonnell Douglas in Long Beach. “I went to work for North American Rockwell in Downey. That’s where my career started in California,” he recalls. “I was full-time. I remember making \$100 a week and bragging to my buddies back home about it. All my life my dad taught me work ethic, so I knew how to work a lot of long hours, and that didn’t bother me.”

As an electrician for North American Rockwell (NAR), Gordon was a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, a strong union. Now, known for his advocacy for the business community that often puts him at

(Please Continue To Page 20)



Before accepting the Long Beach Chamber job in 1994, Randy Gordon sought guidance from a variety of individuals.



Randy Gordon with President Gerald Ford.



From left, former Chamber Chair Dave Dedinsky of TABC, former California State University, Long Beach President Bob Maxson and attorney Alan Tebbetts at a 1995 chamber event.



Sincere thanks for a quarter century of leading the Greater Long Beach Chamber and supporting area businesses.

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Over the last 25 years, you have been the biggest advocate for business in Long Beach. We appreciate you, Randy. CONGRATULATIONS!

John Howard
Owner/Operator
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Getting To Know
All About Randy . . .
Former Chamber Chairs
Share Their Stories

*“I’ve only met a few people in my life that could
actually sell ice water in Alaska in the dead of
winter, and that’s how I would describe Randy.”*

— Jon Deussenberry
Chamber Chair 2016-2017

The Busines Journal staff asked Long Beach Cham-
ber Senior Vice President Jeremy Harris to reach out
to former chamber board chairs to share a serious or
light-hearted moment they experienced with Randy
Gordon during their year as chair. The only caveat
was, don’t tell Randy. Let’s surprise him. Following are
their stories in their own words.

Diane Creel, 1993-1994

I hired Randy Gordon 25 years ago when I was chair,
supported by the then incoming chair Robin Tole. The
Chamber was basically bankrupt when I desperately
needed a President. Robin introduced me to Randy
and we went to have lunch with him. I told him
“Randy, I desperately need you but I don’t know how
I am going to pay you. I hope that you will have faith
in me and together we can turn this thing around.” I
told him I had some ideas and he told me he had
some ideas. We exchanged our ideas and I said
“Randy, come do this with me, this Chamber has the
potential to be the best in the state, and together with
the help of a supportive Board, we can make it hap-
pen.” He came, and the rest is history, I am forever
grateful to Randy Gordon.

Mark Gray, 1998-1999

Congratulations Randy on 25 years! I had the priv-
ilege of serving as Chair and working with Randy dur-
ing my 1998 through 1999 term. We all know Randy
as a high energy, fast-talking person that is great at
raising funds and activating others and, yes, jumping
from one subject to another within the same conver-
sation. One trait I admire about Randy is that once
he makes a commitment, he goes all the way in. It
doesn’t matter if he is working on a new Chamber
event, participating in Dancing with the Stars, imitat-
ing Buddy Holly, or auctioneering for a local charity.
During my tenure we formed The Chamber’s Political
Action Committee and Randy transformed from per-
forming one of his least favorite duties in supporting
ballot propositions to leading the charge in support
of candidates for office. I’m sure Randy tirelessly
walked and canvassed the district more than our can-
didate. Under his direction, The Chamber has be-
come the premier voice and advocate for Long Beach
business. Randy is over the top in keeping his Chairs
informed. Cell phones, palm pilots and emails were
not enough. He kept my office fax machine constantly
working. It wasn’t unusual for my secretary to inform
me that Randy was faxing again. Randy’s longevity in
such a high profile and dynamite position with the
Chamber is truly amazing especially considering the
average duration of a Chamber executive. The Long
Beach Area Chamber is the gold standard and the
envy of many Chambers. Our Community has been
blessed to have such a dedicated leader who has
been all-in for the last 25 years. Randy, congratu-
lations for the past 25 years! I look forward to your
strong finish!

(Please Continue To Page 22)

(Continued From Page 18)

odds with labor unions, he imagines that might be difficult
for some people to believe. “There were a lot of places you
needed a secret clearance to go into; not just anybody can
go into the astronaut’s lounge and change lightbulbs,” he
notes. “I did that for a couple years. And then I ran a printing
press after that in a different part of Rockwell.”

During the Vietnam War, Gordon chose to enroll in school
rather than risk being drafted into the military – as he explains
it, he loved his country but wasn’t ready for military service.
He earned an associate’s degree and transferred to California
State University (CSU), Fullerton, (though he now says it
would have been better had he gone to CSU Long Beach, or
‘The Beach’) where he obtained a degree in history with the
intention of becoming a history teacher. Student teaching
turned Gordon off to the world of education, so when a part-
time job at the Montgomery Ward department store in Nor-
walk led to an opportunity to further his career, he took it.

“I went and worked for Montgomery Ward for 10 years.
And I moved myself up – I was the youngest operations
manager in the region at 23,” Gordon recalls. He eventually
became license concession manager for an 11-state region
in the Western U.S., overseeing companies with operations
at Montgomery Ward stores that were not directly owned by
the department store chain. These were “licensed depart-
ments” such as beauty salons, key shops and optometrist of-
fices. “My biggest claim to fame was I put Jacoby & Meyers
in the first Montgomery Ward store. We put them in about
10 Ward stores,” he says, referring to a law firm known for
its personal injury claim commercials.

Gordon changed paths when he took a job with a small
Montgomery Ward licensee, a hearing-aid business based
in Covina that he had previously worked with. He joined the
board of the Covina Chamber of Commerce, a move that led
ultimately to his long-time career as a chamber executive.
When the CEO of that chamber retired in 1982, Gordon was
asked to fill the role. He took it. “I was pretty young,” he
says, noting that he was 33 years old at the time. “What hap-
pened was, a chamber that size in a small community, you
know everybody. . . . The mayor is kind of the most powerful
man in the city, but a chamber CEO in a small city like that
really has a lot of respect,” he says.

Back then, “everybody was pro-business,” Gordon re-
counts. “In those days, there was no such thing as liberal
left-wing Democrat councilmembers,” he adds. “And it
was a good time, because Covina was growing, even
though it was a small city.”

In 1993, the president/CEO of the Long Beach Area
Chamber of Commerce retired, and the board began looking
for a replacement. Gordon applied for the job, with encour-
agement from a few local boardmembers.

“That’s when I met Diane Creel, who is probably the

strongest woman leader I have ever known in my life,” Gor-
don says. “Incredibly strong lady. Keep in mind, she was the
only lady to head up an engineering company in America at
the time, Earth Tech,” he explains. “She was probably the
most respected woman leader of that era.”

Creel interviewed Gordon for about three hours, after
which she suggested they continue their conversation at L-
Opera Ristorante on Pine Avenue. “I spent about half a day
with her. And I remember getting on my very big mobile cell
phone in 1994, calling my wife, and saying . . . ‘I want to
work for this woman. This is an unbelievable lady. I want to
work for her.’ I was so jazzed. And then she hired me,” he re-
members. “She was the first woman I had really worked for.
Because in those old days, the chair of the board were men.”

Gordon, who was two months shy of his 45th birthday,
began his historic tenure at the Long Beach Chamber on
April 4, 1994. He has held the position longer than any pre-
vious president/CEO. ■

Business, Politics
And Money – Gordon
Reflects On 25 Years
As Top Gun Of The
Long Beach Area
Chamber Of Commerce

■ By SAMANTHA MEHLINGER
EDITOR

As president and CEO of the Long Beach Area
Chamber of Commerce, Randy Gordon over-
sees a small but nimble staff of seven, works
with a 51-person board of directors and five affiliated com-
mittees and councils, and devotes the majority of his time
to one key task: selling.

“Most of the chamber thing is selling,” Gordon says.
“We’re always selling sponsorships. You’re selling mem-
berships. You’re trying to save memberships. You’re trying
to sell big events. The number one asset to being a success-
ful chamber is, you know, you’ve got to be able to sell peo-
ple on events or sponsorships or membership – and people
buy from people they like.” Gordon’s background is in
sales, he notes, and even his biggest hobby/second career
– auctioneering – is focused on selling. “One of the reasons
I am an auctioneer today is I

(Please Continue To Page 22)



A heartfelt
salute to you.

Thank you, Randy Gordon, for 25 years
of service to the Long Beach community.

Dignity Health – St. Mary Medical Center joins the community in
a salute to Randy Gordon’s 25 years as the president and CEO
of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce. Thank you for
your dedication to Long Beach and your meaningful contributions
to our community.

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Randy Gordon with former Long Beach Mayor
Beverly O’Neill, center, and Long Beach Ice Dogs
hockey team President Joann Klonowski, 1995



Randy Gordon with former chamber chairs
Don Wylie and Diane Creel, 1996.

(Continued From Page 20)

Mike Walter, 1999-2000

I became Chairman of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce at the 107th Inaugural Celebration in June of 1999. The 107th year of the Chamber's operation was indeed memorable in many ways. The highlight of the year, however, was the trip to Japan where we attended the International Chamber event. Mayor Beverly O'Neil was also invited to the event. Randy was one of the keynote speakers at the conference. He was one of the best speakers and represented the United States and Long Beach very well. His major message was that International Business presents an economic opportunity to every country. His presentation was well received and drew a lot of questions which he answered very well. Although I did not speak at the conference, I felt honored to attend with Randy and to support his strong points of view.

Our trip included a visit to our sister city, Yokaichi, which we reached by travelling on a very fast train. Our hosts were most gracious and gifts were exchanged. We also had an opportunity to eat a traditional meal in a Japanese home with a Japanese family.

A fourth reason the trip was so memorable was that we experienced strong turbulence for much of the trip over; Mayor O'Neil said she had travelled to Japan several times and this was her most uncomfortable trip. Yet some of our fellow travelers slept through all the discomfort!

Mike Murray, 2000-2001

It's an honor for me, as a former Chairman of The Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, to share some lighthearted moments about my dear friend who I share the same graduating university, Cal State Fullerton, and major, history. In that we both are Titans, lighthearted is the mode of the day. There's not much discussion of molecular biology or Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative. In fact, it's mostly Trout (Baseball) and seats remaining at a function near you. I took a business road-trip with Randy to Santa Barbara, and some might wonder how many words I said on the 200-mile round trip: six, three each way – "I gotta pee." It was a lighthearted blast as it always goes with my pal.

Blake Christian, 2008-2009

The year before I was Chamber Chairman, Randy asked if my wife, Vicki, and I could come to his room for a drink during the Chamber Board Retreat in Rancho Mirage. He and Nancy were even more friendly than usual, so I was on my guard – I assumed he wanted an additional contribution. . . . After a few minutes of small talk he surprised me by asking if I would be the next Chamber Chair. Without hesitation I replied – "No thank you. I really don't have time." Vicki quickly chimed in and said, "You need to think about this – don't say no so quickly." I asked for a week to think about it . . . and Randy only brought up the opportunity a dozen times during that period. As usual, Randy's "charm" got to me (along with Vicki pointing out the long-term benefits). Serving as Chamber Chair was certainly a major highlight of my career and I met some incredible people and built long-term relationships as a result of accepting that role. Randy has been a great supporter and friend since I first came to Long Beach in 1985.

(Please Continue To Page 24)

(Continued From Page 20)

That's what I am going to do full time when I retire. And as a chamber CEO, I am raising money almost every single day."

About 40% of the chamber's revenue is sourced from membership dues. The majority of membership revenue comes from large companies, although about 80% of the chamber's members are small businesses, Gordon explains. The rest of the nonprofit organization's annual \$1.6 million budget is fundraised, primarily through its seven annual events, including the State of the County.

The board meets seven times per year. "As I went from 12 to 7 board meetings over the years, no one, not one person has ever said to me, 'Gordon, we need to meet more often.' You've got busy volunteers," Gordon says. "If you want a John Bishop, for example, on your board, he's running a billion-dollar health care organization. You've got to be really careful of his time," he explains, referring to the incoming chair of the chamber, who serves as president and CEO of MemorialCare Long Beach Medical Center and Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach.

From Then To Now: Trials, Tribulations, Growth And Success

When Gordon came on as president and CEO in '94, he knew little about the city – a point that came up during his interview with the board committee that hired him.

"They had this one person say to me, 'Now wait a minute, if we hire you, you don't really know anything about our city, do you?'" he recalls. "I said, 'Look, I know how to run a chamber. For 12 years, I have run a successful chamber. I can run this chamber. Now, you can teach me Long Beach. But if you hire somebody from within Long Beach, who is going to teach them how to run a chamber?'"

Gordon remained a resident of Covina during his early years leading the chamber in order to let his sons finish their studies at Covina High School, where Long Beach's future mayor, Robert Garcia, also happened to be a student, he notes. "I have known Robert longer than most people here. And Rex Richardson graduated Covina later," he says, referring to Long Beach's current 9th District councilmember. The commute was tough, but Gordon, his wife and kids stuck it out for three and a half years before moving to Long Beach, he recalled.

Making the move from the Covina Chamber of Commerce, which represents a much smaller city, to Long Beach was quite the change. "One day you're pitching on a little league mound and the next day you're pitching on a major league mound. It's a big jump," Gordon says of the move.

"I turned down a few chambers in between . . . I knew in my heart, my gut, everything that this was the right one," he says. "I just threw myself into it and I worked an ungodly amount of hours. I would drive home late at night to avoid traffic. . . . My first wife probably didn't appreciate it and that might have had something to do with us being divorced after 27 years. But I was absolutely obsessed with the job."

Because of that work ethic, former Mayor Tom Clark had a saying about Gordon. "Tom used to say, 'You know, when

Randy Gordon got here, it was like if three people had a meeting, he would be there.' So I went to everything [and] just immersed my soul into this community. I was like a sponge trying to soak it all up," he remembers.

In the mid-90s, Long Beach looked different than it does today. "They had a few more tattoo parlors and they had a few high rises. Long Beach was still trying to find itself," Gordon says. "Long Beach had been an oil town, historically. And then it was no longer an oil town. And when I came on board, it was an aerospace town, but it was starting to come down."

Right away, Gordon was met with trying times for the city, its businesses and residents with the departure of the United States Navy, an eventuality he and former Mayor Beverly O'Neill fought to prevent. "We fought like heck to try to save it. That was a billion-dollar economic impact we lost," he says. Perhaps ironically, he notes, once the Navy left Long Beach, they again "fought like heck" – but this time, to tear down the naval base. "We won that battle, we tore that down, and that expanded the port. So, in reality, it actually was a blessing in disguise. It just took a few years to recover."

O'Neill was Gordon's favorite Long Beach mayor, he says. "In my first 10 years here, Beverly served eight [in office], and then she won a historic write-in [election] that's never been done in America. 25,000 people wrote her in," he recounts, referring to her election to a third time. "She will always be my favorite mayor."

Although Gordon says the chamber has retained a healthy relationship with city staff over the years, his tenure has not been without political tension. After O'Neill left office, Bob Foster, a former Southern California Edison executive, became mayor in 2006 – and things weren't as copacetic with him. "I had some challenging years under Foster's tenure because we didn't particularly get along with him," Gordon says. "He took away our State of the City [event], and that was a big fundraiser for us." When O'Neill was mayor, each year she gave a State of the City address at a fundraiser held by the chamber. But Foster put a kibosh on the practice, Gordon explains.

Quoting an expression used by O'Neill when the Navy left town, Gordon says, "But we 'took those lemons and turned them into lemonade.' We went to our friend [then-Los Angeles County Supervisor] Don Knabe, and then we created a State of the County. That lasted for 10 years with him. Now it has lasted for two years with our new supervisor, Janice Hahn."

Foster's term wasn't just difficult because the chamber was at odds with him – it also coincided with the Great Recession. "We lost a few members during the Recession. It hit some of our larger companies hard and it affected our events," Gordon recalls. "We had to cut back our own expenses because our revenue went down a little bit."

During the same period, the chamber was engaged in a long-fought court battle with Long Beach City Attorney Bob Shannon that had significant political implications. But the legal drama ended up being one of the chamber's biggest successes, in Gordon's estimation.

Gordon recalls, "At the time, there was a maximum you could give the city council [candidates], which was \$300, and a max you could give the

(Please Continue To Page 24)

Thank you, Randy Gordon,

for your 25 years of service and leadership

at the Long Beach Chamber.



It has been a pleasure working with you throughout the years and I appreciate the support you've given to our hospitals and the greater Long Beach community.

– John Bishop, Chief Executive Officer
MemorialCare's Long Beach Medical Center and
Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach



Long Beach Medical Center
Miller Children's & Women's
Hospital Long Beach



Shine Your Light

A heartfelt congratulations to Randy Gordon for 25 years of outstanding service. Thank you for your extraordinary leadership and for lighting the way to a stronger, more compassionate community.



Randy Gordon with former Governor George Deukmejian, left photograph, and former Congressman and California Attorney General Dan Lungren.



Nancy Becker and Randy Gordon with legendary UCLA Basketball Coach John Wooden.

Salute To Randy Gordon

(Continued From Page 22)

Lori Lofstrom, 2009-2010

Anyone involved in any community, political or business activity in Long Beach during the past 25 years has undoubtedly encountered the Force that is Randy Gordon. I have known Randy for over 13 years, but in 2009 I witnessed the Force that is Randy up close as Chairman of the Long Beach Chamber’s Board of Directors. As with all the Chamber Chairs, rarely did a day pass without attending at least one meeting, event, dinner, lunch or breakfast, alongside Randy. At every such encounter, Randy led the charge to advocate, with every fiber of his being, for the City, its businesses and the community. During several pivotal years, Mayor O’Neill, Randy and other key players called the shots in this City and did so to its vast betterment. It is truly what he was put on this Earth to do! Congratulations on 25 remarkable years!

Jim Eaton, 2010-2011

Many congrats to my dear friend, Randy Gordon, on his outstanding leadership of the Long Beach Area Chamber for the past 25 years and countless contributions to our beautiful city. I was honored to serve as Randy’s Chair of the Chamber in the 2010-2011 fiscal year.

A neve to be forgotten, lighthearted moment was certainly my inaugural gala in June of 2010, wherein Randy and I both wore white tunics and headscarves to the stage reminiscent of our amazing U.S. Chamber trip to Dubai, UAE, just prior to my tenure as Chair. I doubt there will ever be an inauguration quite like this one, especially when Randy surprisingly put up a picture from Dubai of me enjoying an after-dinner belly dancer performance from which he then introduced a real belly dancer on stage to dance with me!! I guess I should have expected some type of “payback” after taking all his money playing heads up poker during our flights to and from the UAE!!!

Jerry Miller, 2012-2013

First, it’s important to note that I first met Randy Gordon when he took the Chamber job in Long Beach 25 years ago. I was working for the City then and was managing economic development. I had an opportunity to meet Randy soon after he arrived, and he was very enthusiastic about the projects the City was working on. The two of us hit it off pretty well. As time went on, Randy and I worked together on several successful economic development efforts.

Skipping forward, I retired from the City in 2007 and later that year established IMC Municipal Consulting in partnership with INCO Commercial. Not long after this, Randy asked me to consider joining the Chamber Board, which I did (because how do you say “no” to Randy)? Some three years later I agreed to serve as Incoming Chamber Chair in preparation for serving as Chair of the Board for the 2012-13 year. (What was I thinking?)

Of course, the secret that every past Chamber Chair knows is that serving as Chair is really a three-year commitment as Randy carefully grooms you (Year 1), and then eases you into the “starring role” (Year 2) which Randy has created for his Chairs. Then, in his wisdom, Randy has created the Past Chair role (Year 3) which also comes with Board responsibilities. This three-year period requires one to attend virtually all Chamber meetings (large and small), retreats, events, candidate interviews, special promotions, planning sessions and breakfasts at Old Ranch. There are Sacramento trips, Angels’ games, non-profit galas, meetings with elected officials (even some Democrats), performance reviews, contract negotiations, etc. It’s pretty exhausting, ac-

(Please Continue To Page 26)

(Continued From Page 22)

because I have known him for so long. . . . Bob Foster was the opposite. You got on the wrong side of Bob and he’d make your life miserable. So, my life was miserable for a few years because he made it that way.”

Often, challenges the chamber faces are tied to the shifting balance of political power towards the left – one that has resulted in a number of policies that impact businesses. Gordon doesn’t mince words on the matter: “It’s because the union has got a bigger hold on the councilmembers. You’ve got councilmembers who have sold their soul, collectively lock stock and barrel, to particular unions.” He adds, “When I started, we had I think three or four Republicans on the council. Now the good lord gives us one every decade.”

The biggest issues facing the business community during Gordon’s tenure have cropped up within the past five years, he says. Chief among them is that the state’s minimum wage is increasing in a series of steps to \$15 by 2022. “The minimum wage is going to really hurt small business . . . Just think, small restaurants are now paying \$12 per hour. And some of them have closed already on 2nd Street. You’re going to see more closures,” Gordon says. “Then coupled with that, just the Styrofoam changes,” he says, referring to a local ban on polystyrene products. “One restaurant guy told me it’s going to cost him \$500 more a month because he has so much takeout, because the replacement for Styrofoam to keep the food hot and decent is expensive. And of course, you’re going to have straws [banned] now. It’s just one thing after the other that is piled on that small business owner, especially in the restaurant business.”

Still, it could have been harder on local businesses – local elected officials at one point considered advancing to a \$15 minimum wage at a faster rate than the state, Gordon points out. “We fought the city and were successful to get them to match the state minimum wage. . . . We were all over it. We were so aggressively involved in that,” he says. “We think of ourselves as a six-figure lobbyist, and it comes with the price of your membership.”

In recent years, the chamber was also successful in fighting against a proposed ordinance to impose workload restrictions and create safety provisions at hotels with 100 or more rooms in Long Beach. The city council ultimately voted down the proposal 5-4 in 2017, but a similar proposal was then taken to the voters via a ballot measure that passed late last year. Gordon maintains that the backing union, Unite Here Local 11, deceived voters by alleging that hotels did not provide panic buttons to their employees, although many did, as well as by glossing over proposed workload changes that would be costly to hotels. “Those are the kind of things that just drive me crazy. Those are the kind of issues that are going to cost the city, the business owners, more and more,” he says.

Despite some policies creating impediments to business, Long Beach is undergoing a period of growth unlike any Gordon has ever seen. “There has never been commercial development like there is today. These

(Please Continue To Page 26)



Randy Gordon and Chamber Chair Dr. Mike Walters join California U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein at the National Leaders Luncheon in 2000.



Randy Gordon with former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani



Randy Gordon with former Chamber Chair Lou Anne Bynum and former Long Beach City Manager Jim Hankla

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Randy Gordon

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Thank you, Randy Gordon

for 25 years of commitment to the Long Beach business community



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(Continued From Page 24)

tually, and not without one's contributions of "talent and treasure" as Randy likes to say. (Truth be told, the Angles games were cool, particularly during Mike Trout's early seasons.)

The other secret that every past Chamber Chair knows is that Randy is a little complicated. What most people see is an aggressive, strong-willed, ready-for-battle Chamber executive prepared to take on anti-business forces wherever they may exist. What few people see, and Chamber Chairs are among them, is that beneath that aggressive persona is someone who cares deeply about his family, friends, faith and causes which help others, including support for the health and viability of the non-profit community.

Randy's 25 years of service have passed quickly. It should be no secret that Long Beach would be well-served were Randy to continue to find helpful ways of serving the Long Beach community.

Kristi Allen, 2014-2016

As I was one of the few if not the only chair to serve two years, thus my relationship with Randy as chair was a long one. One of my fondest memories of Randy was our catch up breakfast meetings we tried to hold regularly to review current issues and concerns. These meetings often started on issues but more often than not moved over to discussions on baseball, kids and grand-kids. Though Randy can put on a tough shell when he needs to, he turns into a softie when he starts sharing photos and stories of all of his grand kids. He would go one by one listing off a very long list of sports or activities they did. I saw videos of dancing babies to baseball hits and Friday night light football highlights. I don't know how Randy and Nancy attended so many personal and chamber events all at the same time, but their calendars were full and so was Randy's heart with love and pride of his family.

Jon Deussenberry, 2016-2017

Being a past chair and looking back on my year as chairman you just don't realize how fast the time goes by. I always looked forward to what seemed like my daily phone call from Randy. When Randy calls you might think he's really looking for your input on important decisions, but after time you realize he's made the decision and just does a fantastic job of making you feel like you actually had some input. I've only met a few people in my life that could actually sell ice water in Alaska in the dead of winter, and that's how I would describe Randy. He's an absolute champion for the business community, supports volunteerism and non-profits and has always kept one eye on the future. His legacy will be unmatched and no one will ever equal his passion and love for Long Beach! ■

(Continued From Page 24)

are real exciting times," he says. "I came in 25 years ago with some challenging times, trying to save the Navy and not having a lot of retail. And I am leaving probably some of the best economic times. So, I guess I'm leaving on a good note in 16 months." In mid 2020, Gordon is retiring and handing over the reigns to Jeremy Harris, who currently serves as senior vice president.

Gordon reflects, "The most rewarding part of my job is helping small businesses become successful and seeing them grow . . . because 90% of small businesses don't make it to the third year in America, a stat from the U.S. Chamber." Gordon is thankful for a remarkable career. "I really felt like God put me on this earth to fight for business, and to raise money for small businesses and to raise money for nonprofits," he says. ■

Giving With Heart: Community Involvement

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

While Randy Gordon is well known for his business advocacy and, as he puts it, his "hard side," those who have known him for many years are quick to point out his flip side – what he calls his "soft side," and what others simply refer to as "his big heart."

"He's got a huge heart," Lou Anne Bynum, a past chair of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, says. "He does a lot of the auctions for nonprofits, and he donates his time to do that. He has helped raise literally thousands and thousands of dollars for nonprofits in Long Beach."

Jerry Miller, another past chamber chair and former city manager for Long Beach, points out that many might not know how much Gordon gives back to the community, both in terms of volunteering his personal time and making financial contributions to nonprofits. "I saw firsthand working with Randy. The guy has a heart," he says.

Gordon has served on the boards of many local nonprofits, including the YMCA, the California Conference for Equality and Justice, the Long Beach Opera, the Grand Prix Foundation of Long Beach and others. He has lent his auctioneering skills to more than 30 local organizations' fundraisers, as well.

Two of Gordon's most beloved local charities are the Long

Beach Ronald McDonald House (RMH) and Precious Lamb, both of which are devoted to helping children and their families. "I especially love volunteering for nonprofits that have something to do with children, because my grandchildren are so blessed and a lot of kids are not blessed," Gordon says.

Gordon was a founding boardmember of the Ronald McDonald House, and took part in the nonprofit's capital campaign to open its doors across the street from MemorialCare Miller Children's & Women's Hospital. The nonprofit runs a facility that provides temporary housing, support and care for families whose children are patients at the hospital. "The capital campaign was a group of individuals . . . who helped to spread the word that the Long Beach Ronald McDonald House was coming to the community. They helped raise \$6.2 million back when the economy was rather suppressed," Cheri Bazley, executive director of Long Beach RMH, explains. "The campaign was so successful that it was completed in 18 months, and we opened our doors in December 2011."

Gordon and his partner, Nancy Becker, also personally contributed to ensure that the house would be able to open its doors. Their names grace the entrance to one of the house's rooms. Gordon stayed on as a boardmember for Long Beach RMH until he termed out last year. "Even though he is not currently an active boardmember because he served his max term limit, he still serves on our advisory committee and actively supports us. . . . He is probably one of our greatest advocates," Bazley says. "I just can't say enough about the various ways in which he has helped the mission and the families we've served."

In addition to donating time and money to Long Beach RMH's cause, Gordon has also helped the nonprofit create connections with other organizations and businesses in the Long Beach area, according to Bazley. For all his efforts, the organization honored him at its annual A Few Good Men gala and fundraiser last year. "We look throughout the community and the immediate surrounding communities for gentlemen who are doing good work, giving back in the community and are philanthropically minded; hence the title, A Few Good Men. And in Randy's case, he most definitely fits the profile," Bazley says.

In the past few years, Gordon has also become involved with Precious Lamb Preschool, a Long Beach nonprofit that provides free preschool education to children facing homelessness. He is currently serving on the board. "Honestly, Randy's heart and involvement has only increased since he started. He has really been such a gift to Precious Lamb," Lailanie Jones, the organization's executive director, says. "His commitment has been invaluable to us."

Jones added that Gordon has helped introduce Precious Lamb to others in the business community. She reflects, "I believe Randy's involvement and role as a boardmember has taken us to a different level." ■

(Please Continue To Page 28)



Would like to congratulate Randy Gordon on 25 years of service to the Long Beach Community! Keep up the good work!



Randy Gordon with Tony Blair, former prime minister of the United Kingdom



Randy Gordon with former United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice



Randy Gordon with former Long Beach Area Chamber Vice President of Government Affairs Shaun Lumachi at Lumachi's wedding. Lumachi died tragically in an automobile accident at 33 years old in 2011.



Randy Gordon with former Long Beach Memorial CEO and former Chamber Chair Byron Schweigert at the 2009 Long Beach Chamber Inaugural Gala



Randy Gordon is pictured with 15 former chairs of the board of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce at the 2018 Inaugural Gala. This year’s gala is June 19 at the Westin.

Leadership Beyond Long Beach

■ By SAMANTHA MEHLINGER
EDITOR

Randy Gordon’s leadership in the business community extends well beyond Long Beach proper. The longtime chamber executive has served on the boards and committees of a number of state and national organizations, including the United States Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE), the Western Association of Chamber Executives (WACE), the

California Chamber of Commerce (CalChamber) and other organizations. He is an accredited chamber executive through the U.S. Chamber.

Dave Kilby, executive vice president of corporate affairs for CalChamber and president/CEO of WACE, has known Gordon since his days at the Covina Chamber of Commerce. “I have been around longer than he has. . . . We’re of similar vintage,” he says with a chuckle. “He served as chair of the board of the directors of our association, the Western Association of Chamber Executives. He has done just about everything and won just about every award there is to win in the organization,” Kilby notes. “He is kind of a mentor to many in our business, and he does a great job of outreach to his peers that are new in the area – in Southern California, in particular.”

Gordon served as chair of WACE’s board in 2002 – a position that is granted to those who are well-respected among their peers, Kilby notes. “Like with most leaders, it’s his integrity and his point-blank honesty – that’s one of the things that carries over when he’s with his peers. He is not going to sugar coat things, but you can always trust him. And he’s always a resource that people can turn to,” Kilby says.

Former ACCE President Mick Fleming says Gordon was one of the first people to welcome him when he started with ACCE in 2001. “He was pretty active. He was on the board a couple of different times,” he says. “In the past few years he went on our trust board, which is a group of people who work on the employee benefits program that we offer to chambers. That’s a really responsible job to be a member of that group, because you’re kind of making decisions with other people’s money.”

Gordon also served on ACCE’s Major Cities Council. “He brought the West Coast perspective, but also a really strong pro-business conservative message to the group to keep them honest,” Fleming recalls. “Lots of times, that group would get carried away with ideas and things they were doing in their towns, especially college towns where things get kind of not just progressive, but a little wacky sometimes. And Randy would bring people back to sanity.”

Fleming says that despite the length of Gordon’s tenure as president and CEO of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, he has remained relevant and fresh in the role. “He has adapted and flexed at different times,” he says, noting that this applies particularly when it comes to politics. “His strong stance on politics, he is really well known for that.”

Below is a list of Gordon’s state and national honors.

- U.S. Chamber of Commerce**
- Institute for Organization Management, West, 1988
 - Graduate, Academy at Notre Dame, 1993
 - Member, Committee of 100
- Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives**
- Certified Chamber Executive (Designation)
 - Chairman, Metro Cities Council
 - Chairman, Fringe Benefits Inc.
- Western Association of Chamber Executives**
- Executive of the Year, 1995: For Exemplary Performance & Leadership as a Chamber Professional
 - Russell E. Pettit Memorial, 2001: Excellence in Leadership Award
 - Chairman of the Board, 2002-2003
 - Chairman’s Distinguished Service Award, 1998
 - William E. Hammond, 1984-1985: Scholarship Award
 - Four-time Accredited Executive Designation
- California Chamber of Commerce**
- Chairman, Chamber Advisory Board, 2002
- Southern California Association Chamber of Commerce Executives**
- President, 1991 ■

(Please Continue To Page 30)



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‘The Paths Of Life’: Role Models, Mentors And Family

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

Randy Gordon has amassed a fair number of role models and mentors over the years, but perhaps the earliest was Buddy Holly.

“Buddy Holly was my idol. I was 10 years old when he died. We listened to his music in Lubbock, Texas – my mom and dad were country fans,” Gordon says, referring to his hometown. “But the reason they liked Buddy was because Buddy Holly was the first person to ever be on ‘The Ed Sullivan Show’ from Lubbock, Texas, and my dad thought that was really something.” When Gordon met his partner and soon-to-be-wife, Nancy Becker, nearly 20 years ago, he often sang Buddy Holly songs to her.

“I met her at an International Business Association Christmas luncheon,” Gordon says, referring to Becker, who served on the organization’s board. “And it was almost like cupid shot my butt with an arrow.” Gordon notes that Becker was his first and only date after divorcing his previous wife of 27 years. “Nancy will tell you, I buy everything I see first. . . . Eyes locked and we started dating and I never dated anybody else.” Their first date was December 18, 1999. The two are marrying this May in a small family ceremony at the Hotel Maya.

Other role models – people Gordon never met but has admired – over the years have included author and motivational speaker Zig Ziglar and Grant Teaff, former football coach for Baylor University. Quoting Teaff, he says, “‘Success is in the way you walk the paths of life each day. It’s in the little things you do and the things you say.’ And it goes on, but there’s a line in there at the end, ‘Success is in the family that you love and what they learn from you.’” Gordon reflects, “I have six grandkids, and right now they’re 12, 11, 10, 9, 8 and 7. . . . I have four grandsons and two granddaughters. They are the love of my life and they are God’s gift. Every weekend I am at ball games or plays.”

Asked who he considers to be personal mentors, Gordon mentioned a number of past chairs of the chamber, as well as his high school biology teacher, Robert Moore. Gordon notes that Moore, who is in his eighties, attended his mother’s funeral last year.

Mike Murray, a past chair of the chamber and retired director of government and external affairs for Verizon, has known Gordon as long as he’s been in Long Beach. Verizon’s predecessor company, GTE, rented an office from the chamber, putting the two in close proximity. “It was a time of growth,” Murray recalls, referring to the 1990s. “And I think Randy took the chamber from a representative chamber for the City of Long Beach to one of the most respected and powerful chambers in the state for sure, maybe even the country.”

Murray says that Gordon is an innovator and initiated several new events for the chamber. He also makes it a point to play to his chairs’ strengths, he notes. “What kind of amazed me and still does about Randy is he’s had so many chairs, and I don’t know a chair that hasn’t had a good year with Randy,” he says. “Some of the years were challenging for sure, for political or whatever the reasons might be, but somehow Randy tailors the year so that the chairman is going to be as helpful as they can for business.”

As Murray sees it, Gordon’s strongest leadership qualities are his “loyalty, his commitment and his ability to take chances.” He adds, “Randy has been a boon to me, and he is a really good friend.”

Jerry Miller worked with Gordon both as the former city manager for Long Beach and later, after he moved on from the city and opened a consulting firm, as a member and chair of the chamber’s board of directors. “I first met Randy when he came to Long Beach 25 years ago because I was managing economic development for the city,” Miller says. Gordon was “very supportive and cooperative” and “really interested in promoting business development and growth,” he notes.

Miller says Gordon is focused on supporting business. “He is a very strong advocate for business. He has taken on many issues that people don’t find popular. He has been willing to do that because, in the end, protecting the business community and the private sector is his job,” Miller says. Miller tends to be moderate in his views, while Gordon is often more conservative, he notes. “I think that probably he began to see that a moderate Democrat can be very pro-business, too. I think that was one thing that I and probably others influenced him on.” Miller adds that Gordon “has a big heart,” and is a good person.

Gordon and Lou Anne Bynum, who currently sits on the Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners and is the retired executive vice of college advancement and economic development for Long Beach City College, also go way back. She first met him through her work at LBCC in the late ’90s. Gordon asked her to join the chamber board, and she eventually also served as chair. “It was a wonderful experience overall. I appreciated the opportunity to be able to chair the chamber,” she says. “Randy is a great proactive president and CEO. . . . one of the things I think Randy did that was really important for the chamber was that he gave a voice to the business community and a platform for visibility for business in the city.”

Bynum says she worked with Gordon to ensure that the chamber’s political action committee (PAC) was a wholly separate entity. “We had to make sure we were legal and following all the right kinds of processes that every PAC has to follow. And it still exists I think to this day. So, it turned out to be a really good thing,” she says.

Asked about any advice she ever gave Gordon, Bynum says she had discussions with him about his passion for politics, and how not everyone involved in the chamber agreed with his positions. She told him, “Just be careful, don’t get too far out ahead and don’t be surprised if you get some blowback for it.” To his credit, she says he became more thoughtful about including differing voices in decision making around legislative activity.

In conclusion, Bynum says of Gordon, “I would just like to say that I think Randy has done a remarkable job at the chamber for the last 25 years. He has been a great leader for the chamber. He actually put the chamber on the national map. . . . He is a good man. He is a loyal person. He has got a big heart. And I just want to congratulate him for everything he has done because I think he has done a lot more than people give him credit for in the community.” ■



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