

LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLUM

# Matriarchs of Music

As soon as I received the sad news about the passing of Marge Levin of Wheaton, Md.-based Chuck Levin’s Washington Music Center, it got me thinking about the rare breed of women that she epitomized. I’ll call them the matriarchs of music, and they are often the unsung heroes of the music products industry.

## ESSENTIAL BUSINESS WOMEN



Let’s start with the name: Chuck Levin’s Washington Music Center. Chuck was clearly a legend — a hard-hitting, street-smart entrepreneur who created the single largest music retail store in the country. But if Chuck were still with us, he would be quick to credit Marge for being by his side the whole way and playing a key role in Washington Music Center’s success. In an “Ozzie And Harriet” and “Leave It To Beaver” world, the male focus of the store was likely never given a second thought back at the store’s inception.

Our industry is replete with other examples of incredible women who played important roles in the growth of music retail companies. It would be insane to try and list them all. You could write a book.

NAMM’s Oral History program at [namm.org](http://namm.org) offers a multitude of stories about these industry heroes. Think of the likes of Rose Ash, Eleanor West, Mickey Jent, Kay McDowell and Martha Markowitz — all important and respected figures in the music industry.

**For all they do behind the scenes, music industry moms deserve some time in the spotlight**

loan, the security for which was my mom’s relationship with her grandmother. In the day-to-day operations of the store in its infancy, Mom was the chief bookkeeper. She handled all music lesson scheduling and served as the entire human resources department. She was the person who, in later years, somehow always knew when a manufacturer’s rep was in the store and would track him down with those famous words, “I want to see you before you leave.” The rep knew he was about to have both a warm conversation, plus a no-holds-barred reckoning to clean up some sort of

invoice error.

But what made my mom and the other matriarchs of music extraordinary were the roles they played beyond their daily business functions. Besides all the everyday work she performed so well, Mom was, well ... Mom. She was not only my mother but served that role for the scores of store personnel who worked there through the years. She provided a calming influence, support and motherly advice. She treated each and every young person who worked for us as one of her own children.

And then, at the end of each day, she went home and actually was my mother, my adviser, my confidante, the chief home engineer and director of transportation.

These matriarchs of music were, and are, remarkable women. Today, more and more, we see them in leadership roles. But whatever their positions, you can be certain that many of them continue to take on that additional duty of mom.

Who’s the matriarch of music in your life? Drop me an e-mail, so we can pay tribute to her. (See below.) It’s high time that we get these ladies out of the back office. **MI**

## PERSONAL HEROINE

The best description I can give of a matriarch of music is based on my personal experience. I believe that my mom, Ileana “Lenny” Rosenbloom, was fairly representative of the breed that defines these grande dames.

The very beginnings of Medley Music can be traced to a family

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