



Pacifica advocate, restaurateur and native son runs for City Council

An interview-biography with Robby Bancroft

Written by Jean Bartlett, July 18, 2022



Robby Bancroft, May 20, 2022, Breakers Restaurant, Pacifica, CA.
(Jean Bartlett photo)

It's quiet at [Breakers Breakfast, Brunch & Lunch](#) in Pacifica's Rockaway Beach neighborhood, but only because it's after hours. Open daily, 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., the kitchen is dishing out eggs, crepes, pancakes, benedicts, burgers, salads and much more, while Pacificans and out-of-towners chow down and engage. Cozy and welcoming, it's got that family vibe that says, "Come on in." The owners, father and son team Steve and Robby Bancroft, love their town and each other, and that love, along with knowing how to run a restaurant that hits all the right spots, built this great-to-be-at eatery – once only a "some-day" dream.

This interview-biography with Pacifican Robby Bancroft took place in the late afternoon at Breakers and ended long after the sun went down. Its purpose is not just to reiterate the above headline, but to offer the big book on who this man is and why he loves his town.

The son of Steve Bancroft and Gladys Bancroft-Crampton, the only reason why this native son was not born in Pacifica is because there is no hospital here. It was at Kaiser Hospital in Redwood City where Robert Louis Bancroft took in his first view of the world.

"My parents bought their house on Perry Avenue in Pacifica (Pacific Manor neighborhood) in 1983," Robby began. "Two years later I came along. I lived in that house until the big crash of 2008/2009, aka the Great Recession, which wasn't so great."

Robby's road after the Great Recession was bumpy for a time, but all the roads of his journey to date have led him to where he is today and he makes it clear – he wouldn't change any of it.

"My dad was born in Carmichael, a suburb of the Greater Sacramento metropolitan area. He came to Pacifica in middle school and his family lived in the back of the valley on Yellowstone Way. He went to

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An interview-biography with Robby Bancroft

©2022. (Page 2)

Terra Nova High School and graduated in 1975. I also went to Terra Nova High School and graduated in 2004. My mom was born in San Francisco and grew up in Daly City. She went to Westmoor High School and graduated in 1978. All that side of my family, the Filipino/German side, went to Westmoor."

Steve and Gladys met at Steve's dad's pet store, Serramonte Pets, in Daly City's Serramonte Mall. Along with Serramonte Pets, Grandpa Bancroft owned Golden Gate Pets at Pier 39 in San Francisco.

"As a teenager, my mom used to go to Serramonte Mall and her dream was to work at that pet store. She didn't know my dad and didn't know it was my dad's family's pet store. She got her first job there, drawing signs. Graphic design then wasn't what it is today as a career, but that's essentially what she did. She's quite good at it."

The couple not only began dating, but they introduced Steve's younger brother, Dave, and Gladys' younger sister, Betsy, to each other. The younger siblings also worked at the mall. Dave and Betsy married. Not long after, Steve and Gladys married. That was in March of 1982.

"My dad has remained connected with his friends from Terra Nova and everyone remembers him from when he played baseball in high school. He was a catcher and he was good at it. Even now, people come into Breakers and say, 'Your dad was a hell of a catcher.' People know my mom from when she ran Coastside Critters in Pacific Manor."



Opened in 1991, Coastside Critters and Gifts closed several years back.

"Now my mom runs the pet department at Oceana Market. She loves it. She likes being social and helping people. I like to think that runs in the family!"

"I lucked out. I got a good mix with my parents. They are both really nice people. But I never knew them as a couple. They split when I was 18 months old."

From the age of 9, Robby lived full-time with his dad.

"From 2 to 9, I was 'week on/week off' between my parents. They both agreed to never fight over, 'It's my week,' 'It's your week.' And anytime I wanted to go to my dad's house, my mom would

say, 'That's fine,' and vice versa. My mom lived on Manor and my dad lived on Perry so it was literally eight houses away. From my mom's house, I would hear my dad's truck leave in the morning and then I would hear him come home. Then he'd get a phone call. 'Can I come over?' 'Ask your mom.' 'Mom, can I go over to Dad's?' 'Yes. Is it okay with your dad?' 'Yes.'"

"My mom remarried, my dad never did. I have two half-brothers and my mom let me name them, Kenny Robert Crampton and Cody William Crampton. My stepdad is musician Ken Crampton."

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An interview-biography with Robby Bancroft

©2022. (Page 3)

Locals know Robby's stepdad too. The bass player's résumé includes The Unauthorized Rolling Stones – hugely popular, many-time performers at Pacifica Performances Mildred Owen Concert Hall.

Once Robby turned 9, and he was more involved with baseball and basketball, he moved in full-time with his dad.

"That is also when my mom had my little brother Kenny, so maybe subconsciously I felt like she'd be okay without me or maybe there wasn't room for me. I'm trying to pay more attention to my inner child! I'm a huge proponent of mental health and wellness for all and I try to practice what I preach. I am in therapy weekly and continue to learn how important mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health are to being human."

Robby calls himself a Manor Head.

"I went to Pacific Manor before it was Ocean Shore. Then I went to Sharp Park before it became Ingrid B. Lacy Middle School and then I went to Pacific Heights, which is now the Cosmetology Department at Skyline College. I actually took a college class in the same class I had seventh grade pre-algebra. It was one of my final associate degree classes at Skyline College. I thought this is so weird, nothing's changed. My first date was at the Seavue Twin Theater which is now Walgreens. I remember there was a record store here and of course there was a pet store, my mom's store – now that's a Hot Pot place. The nostalgia is real."



At age 6, Robby was playing baseball at Fairway Park with the Pacifica National Little League. He did that until he was 12. His dad was the coach. He played in the All Stars League. One of his teammates was Greg Reynolds. Reynolds broke into the big leagues with the Colorado Rockies in May of 2008.

"We are a big baseball family. I played second base, left field and I was a pitcher. I loved being a pitcher because you're involved in every play and I loved the strategies we used to get outs. It's like playing chess on the mound where you're playing a game within the game.

"I am a product of the Boys and Girls Club, through and through. I played in their basketball league and their three on three basketball tournaments. I can't believe what is going on with the Club now."

Long serving Pacifica kids, the Pacifica Boys and Girls Club is facing possible closure. Should it close, it will close its doors to 300 kids at the Yosemite site and 100 kids at the Ingrid B. Lacy site.

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An interview-biography with Robby Bancroft

©2022. (Page 4)

"I am already involved and will get more involved in those collaborative efforts to make sure our Pacifica kids have a place to go. All the stuff the Club offered, I did: daycare, summer camps, sports, getting my face painted like a Ninja Turtle at Frontierland Park.

"Additionally, I did PB&R daycare (Parks, Beaches & Recreation Department – City of Pacifica) at Sharp Park."

Nostalgia continues to make Robby smile as he recalls his childhood years in P-town.

"I rode my bike. I played with my cousins at Edgemar Park. We called it the 'Twisty Slide Park.' My cousins lived just two blocks away. We used to have our Power Wheels. We went to the movies at the Seavue Twin and we played arcade games there. I used to go to Coastside Comics when it was located where the Chit Chat Café is now on West Manor Drive. [Now Coastside Comics is Comics & Game Center (Anime Imports) on Manor Drive.] I used to rent videos from Nickelodeon on Manor Drive. Pacific Manor was everything to me."



Robby didn't play soccer in his youth. He said that was a "back of the valley" thing.

"I tried to skateboard, but it didn't really work out. I never tried to surf and I wish I did – although I knew my porcelain skin couldn't take it! One of my nicknames was 'Robster the Lobster' because I would get so red. I just remember sun equals pain! I did gymnastics for a little bit, loved volleyball and remember playing badminton with my mom. I did football, Pop Warner first, then football my freshman year at Terra Nova."

Another childhood nickname was "Foby Robby."

"That was for fresh-off-the-boat Robby. I wasn't personally offended by these nicknames. The only nickname I got in middle school that was meant to be derogatory was 'Casper.' Casper meant really white like the (cartoon) ghost."

Robby's maternal grandmother was from the Philippines and when the middle schooler told his classmates he was part Asian, "They would look at me differently."

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An interview-biography with Robby Bancroft

©2022. (Page 5)

"I got called Casper at Pacific Heights because my white skin made me a minority there. It didn't matter. I had a ton of friends. My dad wanted me to go there to get a sense of a more diverse culture and to have a bigger picture of the world – and the teachers were amazing. In fact, my experience at Pacific Heights was amazing in all the best ways. I'm still friends with kids from Pacific Heights."



Robby and his Lola (grandmother) Esther Breeler enjoying the fruits of their labor.

Another favorite memory of childhood was learning about the importance of fundraising.

"It was at Pacific Heights, a peer-helping class in 7th grade. All of a sudden I am made aware that there are people less fortunate than me and I want to help. We did a Toys for Tots thing and raised \$200. I thought that was like a million dollars. I didn't have any idea how much things cost, but 200 bucks I couldn't even imagine. The peer-helping leadership program at Pacific Heights was run by Ms. Zacconi, Dolores Zacconi. She is a fantastic human being. The whole family is fantastic. Her son is drummer Jay Michaelis."

Jay's band State Line Empire is a regular at famed LA nightclub The Whiskey. Jay is also the owner of Pacifica's Green Room Music.

"Jay kind of led the way for me into music, and that included introducing me to the (rap, hip-hop) group the Beastie Boys when he was my daycare teacher in elementary school. Now I sit on the Pacificans Care Board of Directors with Jay's dad, Dr. Bill Michaelis. This is growing up in Pacifica. This is living in Pacifica. Good people come into your life. I have a lot of support here."

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An interview-biography with Robby Bancroft

©2022. (Page 6)



Robby Bancroft, bottom row, center, with his Pacific Heights peer-helping fundraisers, 1998.

Along with all his other activities of childhood, he had pets.

"We had turtles, lizards, rats, chickens, guinea pigs, bunnies and dogs for pets. This was at my mom's house. At my dad's house, we had fish. I had an outdoor cat that would visit me at my dad's house. But then my dad told me I was allergic to cats. He told me that so we wouldn't get a cat. He confessed that one not too long ago. When I met my partner, she had a cat. I didn't know yet my dad made that cat allergy up. I still thought I was allergic. Jokingly I said, 'It's me or the cat.' She chose her cat! Ha! Ha! Thank God I am not allergic to cats because I love my partner and I love our cat."

When Robby first went to Terra Nova, he focused on sports and academics.

"My dad's generation was, 'Put your head down and work, provide, get a good job, maybe go to college.' My generation was, 'College is your only ticket to be successful. You better do it or you're screwed.' Then I woke up at the end of my junior year and realized oh wait, a lot of my friends that just graduated are not getting jobs. Oh wait, when you graduate you're competing with people already in the business. Oh wait, I don't have to kill myself over this test because I already am going to graduate with honors. Senior-itis kicked in and it almost kicked in too far where I didn't graduate. But because I did so well the first three years, those years leaked into my fourth year and I just made it over the finish line and graduated. In hindsight, I would have dropped out of high school and started college while I was getting my GED (high school equivalency diploma). Society, our counselors, they told us it was college or the military. There were no other choices. Nobody mentioned a gap year." (A year-long break before college, a gap year allows a student to participate in travel, or some sort of work, to engage in educational/thoughtful activities to reflect on the future and prepare for college. Gap years are considered the norm in Europe and Australia.)

There was something else that was very important that happened to Robby in high school – music.

"When I started high school, I played baseball and football. I thought I couldn't be a musician because I couldn't play any instruments. I had friends in bands and I was kind of jealous; though as it turns out, they wanted to be the baseball/football guy. Funny how that works! But we figured it out and all of this led me to this music scene and discovering these really cool bands that I still listen to today."

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An interview-biography with Robby Bancroft

©2022. (Page 7)

In 2000, Robby experienced his first official rock concert – Live 105.3's "Not So Silent Night." Presented at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, that concert starred: The Deftones, Papa Roach, Green Day, Disturbed and AFI. Two years later, the high school junior took in the Foo Fighters, The White Stripes, The Used, Interpol, Finch, The All-American Rejects and Good Charlotte at Live 105.3's BFD event.

"Then there was TRL (Total Request Live) on MTV which was your Boy Bands and all your hip hop artists. I was going back and forth between worlds and I just loved it and I loved music. When I got my first computer, I was always downloading music. But I never thought I could be on the stage. My stepdad has always been in bands and he has always been a runner. Didn't think I'd do that either. Now being in a band and running are part of my personal first aid kit."

In his junior high school year, Robby was recruited for a band.



"I knew Daniel from biology class. I didn't know it was a fake audition for Daniel's real band. He wanted a vocalist that was open and willing to try. I didn't have to sound good but it had to feel good and Daniel knew I could bring a lot of people to the show because I was in a lot of social circles. It was a bit opportunistic but I passed the test. He created a monster!"

The band was Back Seat Driver. Their genre was pop rock and alternative. They played talent shows. They played the Boys and Girls Club. They did fundraisers, including one for Pacifica's Skatepark when it opened on December 5, 2005. Back Seat Driver's stage years were 2003 to 2006. By 2006, Robby started to scream more than sing and the band's sound was becoming heavier.

"When we realized we could play heavier music, half of us combined with another band we used to play with and started Five Characters in Search of an Exit."

The band's name was taken from an episode of the television anthology series, The Twilight Zone. Airing in December of 1961, the episode introduces five strangers who find themselves in a cylindrical enclosure, with no memory of how they got there. The genre is absurdism and it's a worthy watch. Robby's second band ended with the Great Recession. In addition, their lead guitarist moved to Europe.

"I thought I was retired from music. In 2019, that same guitarist moved back and started another band and they needed a singer. This is my current band, Obsolete Man. It's another Twilight Zone reference."

Aired in June of 1961, in "Obsolete Man" the State has eliminated books because the State, according to the State, offers the only truths; hence a librarian is obsolete. But who will win the day, a dictatorship or freedom of thought? Watch Season 2, Episode 29 to find out.

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Pacifica advocate, restaurateur and native son runs for City Council

An interview-biography with Robby Bancroft

©2022. (Page 8)

The members of Obsolete Man are: Robby Bancroft (vocals), Gino Colombini (guitar), Devan Bleyle (bass) and Scott Wright (drums). Robby, Gino and Devan are all Pacifica natives. Scott is originally from San Bernardino. As noted on their [website](#), Obsolete Man is "a hardcore band drawing influences from power-violence, d-beat, grindcore and crust punk." The band's sophomore EP, "Glory Be To The Bomb," was released Friday, May 20, 2022. Have a listen [here](#). On Saturday, May 21, 2022, the band played The X Bar in Santa Clara. The event's headliner was Spite, a deathcore/beatdown hardcore band.

"Spite is one of the most successful bands from the Bay Area right now. We open. We have to pay our dues. We all grew up in the same scene and Spite's lead singer and his brother used to come to my shows when I was in Five Characters. They used to open for us. And now, 10 years later, I am living this experience again with this new appreciation for being in the moment when I'm performing with my band."



Obsolete Man, l to r: guitarist Gino Colombini, drummer Scott Wright, frontman Robby Bancroft and bassist Devan Bleyle.

* * *

It's time to turn the page to Robby's best friend, hero and business partner – his dad Steve Bancroft. They've been through a lot together.

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An interview-biography with Robby Bancroft

©2022. (Page 9)



Son and father, Robby and Steve Bancroft, at Breakers, December 2016, for the Pacifica Resource Center's Holiday Party.

"Until the movie, 'Finding Nemo,' kids films did not represent the father-son relationship that my dad and I have."

Released in 2003 by Walt Disney Pictures and produced by Pixar Animation Studios, "Finding Nemo" is about single-father Marlin and his son Nemo. The two clownfish are separated from each other in the Great Barrier Reef and Marlin will travel an ocean to rescue his very resourceful son.

"'Finding Nemo' has a positive father-son relationship. In a lot of movies, dads are complete jerks or they end up dying. In a lot of television sitcoms, the dads are the butt of the joke. In 'Finding Nemo' there is a father-son team that would literally do anything for each other and that is me and my dad. My dad has a tattoo of Marlin and Nemo on his calf and it's his only tattoo. He got it on his birthday: 10-10-10.

"My dad describes himself as a workhorse. You give him a mission and he puts his head down and goes. His two big dreams in life were having a son and opening a restaurant and he got both of them. But the struggles were real."

Growing up, Robby's best friends called Steve, "Money." There was nothing mean behind it. They were impressed. If Robby needed money, his dad had it. If Robby needed help, his dad was there. But Steve is like a lot of men from his generation, frankly a lot of men and women of every generation – if you are

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An interview-biography with Robby Bancroft

©2022. (Page 10)

struggling financially, you just keep plowing through, you don't ask for help, you "keep your head down and work."

"Years later I am working at the Pacifica Resource Center knowing that they could have helped my dad through some of his struggles before the crash. But my dad didn't know and even if he had known, it would have been hard for him to have asked for help."

The mission of the [Pacifica Resource Center](#) is to "support the economic security of Pacifica families and individuals by providing a safety net of food, housing assistance, and other critical services, including coaching, advocacy, information, and referral."

"Now, more than ever, a lot of people don't understand that even dual-income households in the Bay Area struggle too. As a single father, my dad was our financial support. He worked seven days a week to keep a roof over our heads and food on the table. When he got in over his head, he would try to refinance. We would have roommates, other dads or guys he worked with. He would work extra jobs. It's expensive here and he was working paycheck to paycheck, unable to build up that emergency fund that a lot of us don't have anyway. He filed for bankruptcy in the late 1990s. I know because he told me though I didn't understand at the time what that meant. I was in middle school. I didn't know how bankruptcy follows you. I didn't know how it affects you. I didn't know it was the reason why we couldn't get certain things, or we couldn't get loans or we always got crappy cars that we had to jerry rig. One car we had to bolt down the hood and create a pulley system to open up a door. I just bought a 2001 Honda CR-V and this is the first time I ever owned a car made in the 2000s. We always just survived. I didn't know what a car being repoed meant but I saw two of his cars get repoed. I saw how much it affected him but I was just playing with my friends. I didn't know why the scary man in the big truck was asking for the pink slip and we never had that car again. We survived on \$500 to \$1,000 beater cars. My dad surprised me with my first car, a 1985 Honda Civic he got for \$500. So he did what he had to do and eventually, that catches up to you. But all that time, the most important thing I knew, and know, is my dad loves me. That's a win!"

Steve has worked as a General Manager at several restaurants, and a lot of his customers and individuals he hired followed him to Breakers. He is full of personality, he cares and he is a hard worker.

"I especially got along with one of the roommates we had when I was growing up. He got a job at Chili's in San Bruno. (Chili's is a casual dining restaurant chain). He told us, 'I made \$100.' My dad said, 'You made \$100?' The restaurant business is cash, it's quick. You get your money right at the end of your shift. It's great for single parents or anyone struggling to survive in the Bay Area. I remember us driving to Chili's, sitting at one of the tables and my dad asking for the manager, and then watching my dad fill out an application. I was in middle school. I'd never seen this kind of stuff. My dad gets hired on the spot and works for Chili's for a couple of years and falls in love with it. He's Mr. Personable. He's doing what he does at home, going the extra mile. He's cleaning stuff, he's making coffee and he's asking people if they know he made the coffee. He likes that good ol' positive reinforcement!

"When I was 16, I got a job at Chili's. I was the host. I started around my dad's last day and had the chance to work with my dad on a day shift before he left to work for Stacks in Burlingame, full-time, as their General Manager. Before that, he worked at both Chili's and Stacks – four or five days at Chili's and two or three days at Stacks. He made a lot of money but he was recovering from bankruptcy while raising me and trying to pay a mortgage. That catches up with you as well.

"Fast forward to 2008, 2009, and I am of age and working at the Elephant Bar. I am also at Skyline College studying business and marketing and I have plans for my life. I am doing what I am supposed to do. I start to notice some mail coming in. It's getting a little bit bigger, a little heavier, it's stacking up. I'm

kinda like, 'What's this?' My dad opens the mail, he makes the calls, he buys more time, he does the dance."

As a side note, Robby said that before he worked at the Elephant Bar, he worked at the Best Western Lighthouse in Pacifica and he used to send people to Stacks in Burlingame for breakfast. "Because then, that was the best place for breakfast. Now we're next door to the Lighthouse Hotel. I love that full circle!"

In 2008, Robby's dad pulled the curtain back.

"He taught me what the 'value of a dollar' meant. He showed me how much it costs to survive. But soon after that, we got an eviction notice.

The Not So Great, Great Recession

"We were in over our heads and we didn't know our house was sold at an auction. It was happening everywhere in the country during the crash. We were on the frontline."

"We were in over our heads and we didn't know our house was sold at an auction. It was happening everywhere in the country during the crash. We were on the frontline. See the movie, 'The Big Short.' It's all about this and it really explains it. It is like a full-time job trying to save your house and so much of it we didn't know how to do. I dropped out of college and started borrowing money from my friends and family which taught me how to fundraise from the

heart." (Six years later, Robby went back to school, took the five classes he needed and received his Associate of Arts degree. He studied business and marketing. He had intended to transfer to San Francisco State University but changed his mind.)

"We basically had to decide if it was worth it to stay and fight. If it was happening to us now, I would chain myself to the house. I would call all the nonprofits and alert the media. I would stream it live on Social Media and I would dare the sheriff to kick out this family, this family born and raised here."

What about all their stuff? They had less than a week to get out.

"We did U-Haul runs and I had a truck and it all went into storage. We did it where we would get the dollar-special deal at a storage place, because we didn't have the money, and then we would move it all again to another dollar-special storage, because we didn't have the \$300 to pay for a full month. I was also going through stuff and throwing out what we didn't need. We were talking with lawyers. We had stacks of paperwork and notes to read and sort. My dad was in between jobs. He was working at a soup company and the owners weren't paying him. That was a whole other legal issue. We finally got a lawyer to take us on contingency because we all finally realized that loan companies were preying on people that were financially struggling. They were rubber-stamping loans."

It was the time of the subprime housing bubble, caused by increasingly risky subprime mortgage bonds, which led to the 2008 financial crisis or The Great Recession and Its Aftermath, 2007 through 2009, with fallout continuing.

"We sued the title company. The judge we had said something to the effect of: 'These banks have so much money and so much clout they will just bury you in legal fees so that you tap out and quit. My advice is quit now, rebuild your lives. In ten years you'll be better off than if you had stayed and fought the banks, because they have unlimited money.' So we ended up settling a portion of the case for about \$20,000 and started over."

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An interview-biography with Robby Bancroft

©2022. (Page 12)

Robby said he was 22/23 going on 40.

"My dad and I were like equals. I was filling out paperwork. He was signing it. That's why we work so well together now. We try to be authentic and real with each other."

The father and son had no credit. Robby barely had a work history. A friend knew about a house rental in San Bruno. The landlord, who was elderly, lived elsewhere and was, as it turns out, gravely ill with leukemia. The house was near the train station, by Artichoke Joe's.

"We were both living paycheck to paycheck. We went from a home in Pacific Manor where we never locked the door to a place where 'I don't know these people, the train is running by and we always lock the door.' The fireplace didn't work, the carpet was awful and someone defecated on one of our walls, near our garage, the first month we were there. I'm trying to figure out what I want to do with my life with everything crashing down around me. Do I want to continue to pursue music? Do I want to do marketing? Do I want to go into tech?"

Robby got a job in San Francisco at Hot Topic. The store sells pop culture and music-inspired merchandise. His plan was to use the job as a stepping stone to get his foot into the music industry. But he was losing money. Taking BART to work and buying his lunch in the City was eating up his paycheck. He was making \$9.92 an hour. He said the whole thing was nuts but he made a lot of connections. Still, the housing crisis was far from over for Steve and Robby. The man who owned their rental died of leukemia. The home went into foreclosure. The two men were evicted by the company that bought it. They moved to Belmont. It was difficult to seal the rental. Their financial stability was still one match from a powder keg. Steve was managing Bay Watch Restaurant in San Mateo. Robby got a marketing/events production job through a company partnered with Chegg Textbooks and Monster Energy.

"We would show up on a college campus, Arizona State for instance, and bring an artist and sponsored products and collect emails. I did that all over the country, learned a lot and made a lot of contacts. The job ended in the summer, when school was out."

Then Robby got a job in Mountain View, with Google.

"I worked for the Google Maps department as a data analyst. Basically we were responsible for making sure that each business had their key information available on their business page. When you get directions on your phone, and it directs you to that red pin, my team was the one making sure the information was accurate and the pin was in the correct spot. It was technology and marketing. It interested me because it was this new tech age. It also paid really well and working on the Google campus, with the benefits of free food and the gym, was like having the keys to Disneyland."

And something else happened. Robby introduced his dad to Ray Gheith, owner of Upper Crust Deli and Good Fellas Pizza here in Pacifica, and Steve and Robby talked to Ray about the restaurant that they had long-dreamed of opening in their hometown.

"Ray believed in our business concept and agreed to invest in our restaurant."

In August of 2013, the Breakers team submitted their LLC business paperwork.

Steve quit his job to work full-time getting the restaurant ready. Robby took time off from Google, with their approval, to work on the restaurant with his dad.

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An interview-biography with Robby Bancroft

©2022. (Page 13)

"The day we opened, March 8, 2014, I didn't know we were going to open that specific day. We were so strapped for cash. Ray had given everything he could. I gave everything I had. I was bringing food home from work so my dad could eat dinner. That saved-dinner money went into the business. My dad called me. It was Saturday morning. 'I just have to open. If we don't open today, we are never going to open.' I was sleeping. I was in Belmont. I woke up and the power was out, and I found a three-day notice to pay-rent-or-quit on our apartment's door. But all the cooks and all the staff at Breakers just pulled out cash and started the till. I got to the restaurant and we did our first day and people walked in like we had been here for years. And I just hugged my dad and we cried."

In March of 2022, Breakers celebrated their eighth anniversary.

When Robby went back to Google, some of his team had left to do similar work for Apple.

"Apple also contacted me and we negotiated an offer that I thought was too good to turn down. The money was even better than Google but with none of the perks.

"I will say for me, Apple was an awful experience. I will never again do something solely for the money. I was stressed out. I gained weight and my hair was falling out. I was working Monday through Friday at Apple and weekends at Breakers.

"Between 2014 and 2015, my dad and I were finally able to move back to Pacifica. Friends helped us find places to live. Our first rental was in the mobile home park on Palmetto. Our second rental was a six-month stay in a place on Palmetto, across the street from Recology. When the owner decided to move back in, we moved into our third Pacifica rental, which, as it turns out, was my childhood best friend's grandma's house. We were there for a couple of years and that really helped stabilize us. We could look into the future and know where we were going."

Robby left Apple. He and his dad were still climbing back to financial stability and good credit. A couple of board members from the Pacifica Resource Center stopped at Breakers. They were on a walk for business sponsors. Robby liked their organization, liked what they were doing for locals and joined their board.

"I joined the board when Tygar joined." (Tygarjas Bigstycck currently serves on Pacifica's City Council as Mayor Pro Tempore.)

"We started planning stuff and they started teaching me about nonprofit fundraising. I did that for a year. We went through an operations audit, where Second Harvest Food Bank partnered with a nonprofit consulting firm to try to find the missing link in how to 10x the nonprofit's efficiency, particularly fundraising. They identified that PRC was missing someone that was all of these things: well known in the community, tech savvy, not afraid to talk to people and who could raise money."

The job's qualifications were Robby's qualifications. He was invited to interview.

"My dad was like, you kind of need a job, we don't need both of us here. Either I run it or you run it. This is my baby. I can do it. Go be your own person."

In September of 2016, Robby was hired as PRC's Development and Communications Coordinator.

"Development means fundraising," he explained. "My work plan consisted of approximately 75% development/fundraising and 25% communications/marketing. One major aspect of our fundraising efforts was the Palm-a-Palooza event."

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An interview-biography with Robby Bancroft

©2022. (Page 14)

Palm-a-Palooza is a good food, fun-themed event which encourages costumes and has a fantastic auction.

"It was very successful," Robby continued. "The purpose was to get people out, to get them to meet us and learn about the Pacifica Resource Center, and to show them our appreciation for their support. We raised money online and directly through mail during our year-end campaign as well. We would have a year-end match challenge from the Sam Mazza Foundation and from that we raised over one hundred thousand dollars.

"Another campaign was the Mother's Day Card, which everyone liked. We brought in local artists and photographers."

For a gift of \$50, PRC will send a Mother's Day Card with a locally-written poem and local art, specially personalized to the mom, grandmother, or other celebrated mom, as chosen by the sender. One of the many things the PRC does is help mothers and their children with groceries, housing support and other critical services.

"There was also just every day giving, I was in charge of tracking that and putting it into the computer. Had I known in 2008/2009 that PRC existed, my whole life would be different. Do I want to turn back the clock? Not at all. If there was a silver lining of that really difficult period it is that we survived. I have seen from my own experiences, and from working with the Pacifica Resource Center, just what one unexpected emergency can do to a family. Most of us are just one emergency away from being in a crisis. Also, a little food for thought, not everyone who has a great job and a lot of money is happy. It's not all about the titles and the money.

"So, no, I wouldn't trade my experiences."

Nor would he trade his outfits!

"I like to wear different outfits, especially for fundraisers. I've been a carnival clown, cowboy, hippie, cow, bear and shark. I like creating content for the Internet and I know that cool little costumes like this will break through the noise. It's entertaining and fun, and it also gets the work done."



Cowboy Robby Bancroft emcees at the Palm-a-Palooza PRC event hosted at Pedro Point Fire-house, August, 2018.
(contributed photo)



Cows Elsie, Tom and Lucy–Carol Fregly, Marv Morganti & Robby Bancroft—and the ghost of Mrs. Mori–Robine Runneals—at the 2019 Pacifica Historical Society Pacifica Jack Cheese Contest.
(Jean Bartlett photo)

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An interview-biography with Robby Bancroft

©2022. (Page 15)

In late 2019, Ray Gheith offered to be bought out of the business.

"My dad and I were working on buying Ray out, but then came the pandemic. We still managed to become full owners while we were closed down for nine months. Thankfully, we survived with support from our community and some emergency assistance loans and grants."



Steve and Robby Bancroft, Kings of Breakers, enjoying a few treats from their menu's list of 139 items.

In September of 2020, Robby left the Pacifica Resource Center.

"It was a very hard decision, but I left to focus on my mental health, relaunch my consulting business and support Breakers during the pandemic."

His consulting business team does media and marketing.

"One of our clients we work closely with is Mary Bier. Along with being Pacifica's Mayor, Mary is also the director of the Pacifica Prevention Partnership."

The Pacifica Prevention Partnership is "a special project of the Jefferson Union High School District. Mary works with students, parents, and local law enforcement to conduct research, share resources, and implement prevention and recovery strategies throughout our community. The Partnership is all about reducing youth access to alcohol and increasing supports and opportunities for Pacifica youth."

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An interview-biography with Robby Bancroft

©2022. (Page 16)

"We design logos, create content and help with their presentations for Be The Change Youth Coalition," Robby noted. "We're very particular who we work with. We have also worked with the Pacifica School Volunteers. We enjoy working with youth organizations."

In 2020, Robby joined the board of [Pacifians Care](#). A nonprofit, Pacifians Care is locals supporting locals. They provide annual grants to Pacifica's four core social service agencies: the Pacifica Youth Service Bureau, Pacifica Resource Center, Pacifica Senior Services and Pacifica Child Care Services. The Board members of Pacifians Care are all unpaid volunteers.



Pacifians Care Bear (Robby) at Pacifians Care "Double Gold Day Wine Tasting Fundraiser" at Pedro Point Firehouse, May 1, 2022. (contributed photo)

And of course, Robby still works for Breakers.

"Everything that happens between 7 a.m. and 3 p.m. on the tile is my dad's responsibility. He's operations. He hires, trains, orders and pays the bills. I am behind the scenes, more like a personal secretary and admin for the business. We meet at least once a month to check in on our current priorities and review the financials together. I am also responsible for marketing, advertising and communications, as well as managing any special projects we are dealing with or developing."

Where did the name "Breakers" come from?

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An interview-biography with Robby Bancroft

©2022. (Page 17)

"My dad and I were here one late afternoon/early evening. The sun was setting and we were walking around visualizing where we were going to put the tables and chairs. We walked out to where the Moonraker Restaurant is and looked out to the cove and I told my dad, 'I want the name to represent and honor Pacifica, but I don't want to have Pacifica in the name because what if we want to open more somewhere else.' Then I started naming local attractions and events, 'the San Francisco Bay, Bay to Breakers...' And my dad said, 'Breakers!' And we both said, 'That's it! I love it!'

"Three days after we opened, I held an elderly gentleman's hand to guide him to his seat. He told me, he used to come to our restaurant as a kid. I said, 'Sir, that's impossible. We opened three days ago. Before us, it was Acapulco Restaurant.' And he said, emphatically, 'No! I'm sure of it!'"

As Robby subsequently learned, there was a Breakers Restaurant in that gentleman's childhood and it is now the location of the Pacifica Lighthouse Hotel, which is also home to the Moonraker Restaurant. That long-ago Breakers was across the street from Nick's Restaurant. In 1958, it was destroyed by a storm. Nick's Restaurant has photos of it in their lounge.

* * *

In September of 2021, alongside Congresswoman Jackie Speier, San Mateo County Health Officer Scott Morrow, Half Moon Bay City Councilmember Joaquin Jimenez and other esteemed honorees, Robby was honored by Pacific Coast TV for his service to the community. That same month, Robby was one of three everyday reviewers interviewed by host Leslie Sbrocco of KQED's *Check, Please! You Gotta Try This*, a spin-off of the long-running KQED favorite, *Check, Please! Bay Area*. Each local revealed their recommendation for a delicious dish at a favorite restaurant in their town. The cameras traveled to that restaurant and presented mouth-watering views of the preparation, presentation and enjoyment of that dish. Robby sent everyone to Pacifica Brewery for their PB Burger (beer onions, sharp cheddar on a handmade pretzel bun served with house fries). He also highly recommended a second stop, same place, for their Sunday brunch beignets with apple butter and salted caramel sauce. Watch that episode on [YouTube](#).

"That was so much fun," Robby said. "I couldn't plug my own restaurant but I could highlight one of our wonderful new restaurants to help get people out here to have a look around. We have so many great things to offer here so promoting Pacifica was my goal."

Why does he care so much about this city? Why does he want to run for City Council? Specifically, he will be running for City Council, District 2. Districts 2, 3 and 5 will be up for election for City Council seats in November 2022. District 2 is Pacific Manor, Edgemar, a little bit of Westview and some of Sharp Park. For City of Pacifica 2022 Municipal Election Information, click [here](#).

"I have a strong connection to Pacifica and I care deeply about this community, and I always strive to serve and be of service at the highest level. I've thought about running for years. My father said, 'Let's get stable, get the business and your life going before you run.' I love Pacifica. I know I am capable of doing this and am ready to commit the time it takes to serve for the next eight years. I'm all in."

Robby started going to City Council meetings when he worked for PRC, and continued attending when they adapted to virtual meetings due to the pandemic. He likes keeping his finger on the pulse.

"What are some of my priorities? Mental health and wellness, affordable housing, responding to climate change, protecting our environment and boosting our local economy. The community needs to know our city will soon be facing a \$2 million deficit. We are not okay and we need to make up for that – and to me that means shopping local and promoting our businesses. The Chamber of Commerce and the Economic

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©2022. (Page 18)

Development Committee need to work together, listen to the needs of our businesses and put successful marketing campaigns together that will help us get more people through our doors.

"I want to use all these things I have learned through working in the music, marketing, restaurant, tech and nonprofit industries. I fully understand what it takes to be a small business owner in this town and I want to help others succeed. I want to bring more kindness, empathy, hope, inclusion, love, equity, community and justice to the table. These are more than just buzzwords to me. This is what we should be talking about, not what we've been programmed to believe makes us successful or cool.

"I want to lead by example. I want to be as authentic as I possibly can and I want to be held accountable. Be the change you wish to see in the world! I don't like the 'us versus them' mentality. I believe if we can sit down and have conversations, we can get things done.

"How do you get the people in Pacifica to care? I create content and I have a podcast. It's all about communication. Tell your story, document your journey and engage with your audience. It will come back to you.

"Not everyone uses the Internet and some people who do are tired of it. Fliers, posters and signs still work. A billboard in Pacifica would work. You have to meet people where they are at. Print out the information if you have to and bring it to them.

"We weren't able to do a lot of marketing for Breakers when it first opened. Word of mouth was huge. There are a bunch of ways to support local businesses – like telling your friends or leaving a positive review. That costs nothing."

Shortly after the restaurant reopened, the 'Breakers Shark' was born. Robby dressed up as that shark and made a music video for Breakers that got nearly 14,000 views on Facebook from local users.



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"All of these things I am—business owner, content creator, fundraiser, musician, and I'm bringing my inner child too—they all come into the room with me. I am ready for this next chapter. We are making history. I was conceived in District 2, raised in District 2, I live in District 2, and it seems only right that I am the first one elected from District 2. I was born for this."

Robby's World: Breakers, band, podcasts and campaign information at robbybancroft.com.



Robby Bancroft at Breakers Restaurant, 145 Rockaway Beach Avenue, Pacifica, CA, on May 20, 2022. End of interview. (Jean Bartlett photo)



Jean Bartlett is a longtime Bay Area features writer: Pacifica Tribune, Oakland Tribune, San Jose Mercury, San Mateo Times, Portraits & Roots, Marin Independent Journal, Twin City Times, Ross Valley Reporter, Peninsula Progress, Coastal Connections, Contra Costa County Times, Bay Area Business Woman and Catholic San Francisco. She is also a former Hallmark Card writer, a produced playwright and a published author. Her website is Bartlett's Biographies.