

Chris Roach

I was born in Pittsburgh, Pa. We lived in a small town named after some guy named Carnegie, about 5 miles from downtown Pittsburgh. Dad owned a small butcher shop handed down by his father. Mom was a housewife and helped at the shop on weekends. My brother was born 2 years after me. I had a large family on both sides with 35 first cousins!

I attended a Catholic “Co-intuitional” High School, where the boys were in one wing of the building and the girls in the other. Like that was going to keep us apart! My brother & I helped at the shop making deliveries & doing a bit with the meat cleaver occasionally. Neither of us lost any fingers! We both worked summers on county road crews cutting weeds, painting guard rails and filling potholes. I also hitchhiked to a Country Club in the next town to caddy. (Old guy memory: I carried 2 bags up & down a hilly course, in the heat & humidity for what you today would tip a guy to clean your clubs after a round at a resort, \$5!) I worked a couple summers during college for US Steel as a deckhand on river barges carrying coal from the mines to the mills (on those rivers always seen at the beginning of Steeler games!). After receiving a BA in Economics in 1970 from a State University, I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do. But it wasn’t going to be working in the butcher shop or on the barges!

So that’s where my great adventure began. A buddy & I decided to try out another part of the country, definitely somewhere warmer! At first we thought of Florida, but that was already known as a haven for old folks. Seeing people in shorts & tees on TV in the winter at football games, we decided on California to see what that was all about! Neither of us owned a car, so we “transported” one to LA. We paid for gas & had use of the car, until we arrived in LA. What, no car in LA?! Neither of us had much money, just some savings & graduation gifts. We didn’t know anyone and had no job prospects (Brilliant!). My first job offer came from a guy walking the streets of downtown LA. He was one of those guys who sold watches & jewelry displayed from the lining of his overcoat. I passed on that and got a job working as a management trainee (grunt) in retail downtown. Fortunately, the store had a lunch counter where I could eat until my first paycheck. I didn’t want to have to call home for money! Especially since my Dad didn’t think much of me moving across the country (“You go to California, you’re gonna be a Bum!). I stayed in LA for about a year. My buddy lasted 6 months.

California turned out to be a real opportunity for me. The state was rapidly growing (20M then, 40M now!) After retail, I got a job in banking. By that time I had moved to Ventura and started working at the bank’s auto dealer group, inventorying dealers, collections and repossessions (that’s a whole other story)! I was later accepted into the bank’s management training program in SF. Once I saw the City on an earlier visit, I knew I wanted to live there in what I referred to as “Disneyland for Adults”!

I met my wife Pat in SF. She was in management with Pac Bell at the time. I had one more stint with US Steel, when I joined their Credit Dept. in SF. I watched from my office on the 15th floor as the Charles Schwab building was erected across the street. I had the full “Steel Industry experience” when I was laid off in an Industry downturn in the early 80’s. Then it was back to banking. We were lucky enough to be renting in a 12-unit apartment building that converted to

condos. As residents we were given the option to purchase our unit and thankfully we were able to.

Our son Jeff was born in SF. When Jeff was 5, we decided to move out of the City (after 16 years for me) and decided on Sonoma County and Windsor. We decided to hold onto our condo as a rental, knowing that we would never be able to afford to move back in case Sonoma Co. wasn't what we expected. I transferred here with a bank I was with at the time and continued in banking with other local banks. One of the banks I worked for had a Premium Wine Group and I learned a lot about wine, much of which I've now forgotten. With all the wine tasting, barrel tastings and social events, both Pat & I enjoyed that job. Banking provided the opportunity to attend many sporting events with clients and good seats to Giants, 49ers and Sharks games! The largest deal I worked on was the \$1B,715M participation loan in the late '80s to take Levi Strauss private. It just went public again in the last couple years. I retired from banking in 2011 as a Senior VP. in commercial lending.

Jeff grew up in Windsor but is living in SF again with his wife & 2 small kids (2 and 4) in our condo where he grew up. He is a software engineer and Lyndsey just returned to work for a national accounting firm, after a stint as a stay-at-home mom for a couple years.

I coached Jeff in basketball with the Windsor Youth Assn. Basketball org. I was a CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) volunteer where I mentored 2 boys for 5 years. I would later be a board member for 6 years. I volunteered with Meals on Wheels for 2-3 years.

Pat & I are having lots of fun with the grandkids, but it can be exhausting when we babysit with them on some weekends and while their parents are away! In addition to Mexico, Arizona and Hawaii, we have traveled to the UK, Italy, France, and Germany and will be visiting Spain this spring. Locally, we frequently visit our favorites, Tahoe and Monterey. We still enjoy the City, but it's got a ways to go to get back to where it was!

I am really enjoying SIR, with all the activities and making new friends. I completed my time as Big SIR in 2023 & will continue as Friendship chair. I continue to believe that SIR was created by women, who wanted some way to get their men out of the house!