

Sabu Pullano Shake, Jr., “JR”

1961

RESTAURATEUR, BUSINESSMAN, PHILANTHROPIST

WRITTEN BY CHRIS SHAKE

Samuel Pullano made the journey to the United States from the city of Catanzaro located in Calabria, the southwest region of Italy which occupies the “toe” of the country’s boot-shaped peninsula. He arrived on the East Coast and made his way to Sacramento, California, where he met and married his wife, Maria. It was there that Isabella Pullano was born and eventually met Sabu Shake Sr. Sabu was born in Karachi, Pakistan, and had attended school in England. With the help of a relative he immigrated to the United States, living first in Los Angeles and then Sacramento. Isabella and Sabu were married in Sacramento in a ceremony that combined Italian and Pakistani traditions.

After the birth of their first son, Benji, Sabu came to Monterey and found work at Los Laureles Lodge in Carmel Valley. Isabella and Benji came to join him. Sabu honed his cooking skills and after a time was hired at Lou’s Fish Grotto on Fisherman’s Wharf apprenticing with Nick Serrasin, who taught him to prepare many recipes including the clam chowder that later helped put Sabu’s restaurant on the culinary map. When the small restaurant across the wharf from Lou’s came for sale, Sabu jumped at the opportunity to go into business for himself. Isabella split her time between caring for the Shake boys in the upper floor of the Grotto and working the cash register downstairs. Although he spent many hours growing the business, Sabu always made time for family making sure he came home to prepare and eat dinner with the family every night. Sabu did the majority of the daily cooking, but Isabella carried on the traditional Italian cooking for the family.

Sabu Jr., known as “JR”, was the fourth-born of what eventually became a family of six sons: Benji, David, Chris, Sabu “JR”, Angelo and Tene. JR was born in 1961 and never knew his Italian grandparents, *Nonno* Samuel and *Nonni* Rose, as they

had passed away a few years before his birth. His brother Chris has great memories of them as being loving and kind.



**Back row: David, Sabu Sr., Benji, and Isabella.
Front row: JR, Angelo and Chris.**



**Isabella, JR, Angelo
and Tene.**

JR attended San Carlos School while the family lived in Seaside and attended Junipero Serra in Carmel when they moved to Carmel Valley, graduating from Monterey High School in 1978. While at San Carlos School JR was an altar boy for Monsignor Ryan at the San Carlos Cathedral. His mother Isabella was very religious and had the support of her husband in raising their children as Catholics and having them partake in all the religious ceremonies including baptism, first communion and confirmation. During Lent she told JR to give up something meaningful. She attended Mass regularly and taught JR to make the sign of the cross and say a prayer every time he drives by a cemetery. Isabella would say “Be thankful for what we have, a roof over our heads, clothes and food.” Even when times were tough, she always donated money to those less fortunate. Both parents had big hearts and encouraged helping people in need. JR is a devout Catholic.

JR began working at the family restaurant, Old Fisherman’s Grotto, at the age of 13 clearing tables, seating guests and learning how to be a cashier alongside his dad and brothers. After school he would go upstairs to the office of the Old Fisherman’s

Grotto and do his homework before reporting for work. At 18 he was opening and closing the restaurant by himself. He worked his way up to manager and learned all aspects of the restaurant business, including marketing and financial management.

JR is a proud father of five children: Nicholas, Sabella, Tesa, Samuel and Samaria, and grandfather of Luxston, LeeVi and Paislee. He enjoys spending time with his children and grandchildren, especially going to their games.



Samuel, Tesa, JR and Samaria.



Tesa, Nick and Sabella.



JR, Luxston and Sabella.



JR, grandson Luxston and Nana Shake.



JR, Samuel and Samaria.



LeeVi, JR and Paislee.



Isabella Shake was awarded the William Booth Award, named after the Salvation Army founder and one of the highest awards given to any individual. Front row: Sabella, Tesa, Paislee, Luxston, Isabella, Samaria, Carmela, Samuel, Angelo. Back row: JR, Benji, Omar, Omar Jr., Chris, Lisa, Austin, Arlene, Tracy and Tene.

JR enjoys traveling and has been to Italy several times. He enjoys golfing, cooking and using his wood-burning pizza oven. He has a group of about a dozen school

friends who get together regularly for coffee, Monday night football, dinners, wine and golf trips.

In 1995 JR and his brother Chris opened The Fish Hopper on historic Cannery Row. Following the enormous success of this restaurant, they soon purchased an oceanfront property in Kona and opened The Fish Hopper restaurant there along with other commercial and rental properties, employing over 400 employees.

He is currently the CFO of the Restaurant Pacific Group, The Fish Hopper in Monterey, and The Fish Hopper in Kona, Hawaii.

JR is currently a member of the Compari Club, the Paisano Club, the Chaines des Rotisseurs and the Sheriff Advisory Council. He is a past board member of the Boys & Girls Club, Fisherman's Wharf Association, the California Restaurant Association and the Monterey Commercial Properties Association.

JR was awarded the M. Temple Elliott Award from The Salvation Army--Monterey Peninsula Corps and The Others Award--the highest national award given to a civilian by The Salvation Army. In addition, in 2015 the Paisano Club named JR the "Paisano of the Year," and he was also inducted into the Junior Achievement Hall of Fame.

JR has served as a volunteer in many local fundraisers and charitable events along with supporting--through The Fish Hopper restaurants in Monterey and Kona--over 300 non-profit organizations, charities and events by donations, sponsorships and financial support that directly benefit the homeless community. In 2007 he organized a dinner and live auction event entitled "Sabu's Safari" to raise additional funds to benefit The Salvation Army--Monterey Peninsula Corps in conjunction with the annual Christmas fundraiser in memory of Sabu Shake, Sr. The first Sabu's Safari was attended by over 250 guests and was a tremendous success; carried on by JR and his brother Chris, it is now in its 15th year. To date over five million dollars has been raised for the benefit of The Salvation Army--Monterey Peninsula Corps. As a result, The Salvation Army renamed their Sand City Good Samaritan Center

the Sabu Shake Sr. Good Samaritan Center. JR says it was a great way to honor and remember what his father did for all those years.



**Renaming of Good Samaritan Center:
Chris, Captain Paul Swain and JR.**

In 2012 JR initiated a Salvation Army Turkey Drive Challenge. He reached out to friends, business colleagues and vendors for donations to purchase turkeys or hams for people in need during the holidays. This is now an annual turkey drive that provides the funds to purchase nearly 1500 turkeys and hams each year. JR also hosted an annual holiday toy drive at his home that collected thousands of toys and gifts for families and children at Christmastime.

In November 2014 JR initiated and hosted the first ever Red Kettle Kickoff for The Salvation Army at The Fish Hopper restaurant in Kona. It was a tremendous success and continues to this day, bringing in necessary funds to benefit Kona's homeless community.

During the recent Covid-19 pandemic, when businesses were ordered to close, JR and his brother Chris were so concerned about their employees' health and financial welfare that they decided to feed their employees and their families one meal each day throughout the entire time the restaurants were closed. In addition, they provided meals for the waterfront homeless community and all the people residing in the transitional housing units at The Salvation Army.

For JR, growing up in Monterey was a memorable journey, meeting so many people and making great friends. He remembers the old days when you could drive right onto Fisherman's Wharf and buy fresh fish from the markets, when there were neon signs and boat rides where they would advertise the next cruise using a bull horn,

when you could see the fishermen coming to the wharf daily with their fresh catch of the day to make deliveries to the markets and restaurants. He will always cherish those days and appreciate all the hard work the fishermen did to provide fresh seafood to Old Fisherman's Grotto.



JR, Benji, Angelo, David, Tene and Chris with mom, Isabella, at her 90th birthday party.

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