

Bartlett's News Briefs



NOT JUST ANYBODY

community-sponsored stories

by Pacifican Jean Bartlett, longtime Bay Area News Group writer

June 17, 2026

A look at the history of the Pacifica Pier includes a salute to Andy Pappas and Anna Boothe, two dedicated voices to our walk above the bounding main



On March 20, 1973, employees of Healy Tibbitts Construction Co. of San Francisco work on the building of the City of Pacifica's Ocean Fishing Pier and Outfall. (Photo courtesy of the Pacifica Historical Society.)

What has happened in Pacifica this June of 2026 to cause so much collective mourning? At 7 a.m., Thursday morning, June 4, city engineering crews observed "cracking, separation and displacement" of the Pacifica Municipal Pier's concrete walkway and structural elements near the Pier abutment." The Pier was closed until it could be determined if it was safe for public use. By Friday morning, the beloved Chit Chat Café – the longtime welcoming gateway to the Pier – was showing obvious visual structural damage. A wide crack, running from top to bottom and across the Café walls, had developed due to the shifting foundation. A wider crack at the base of the Café revealed the walkway was beginning to separate from the building. The Café was red-tagged. With no other options, Pacifica's City Council approved the demolition of the Chit Chat Café on Monday night, June 8, and on Tuesday morning, June 9, demolition

began. It all happened so quickly that Chit Chat owners Ginger Davis and Branden Jenkins were unable to recover any of their sale items, restaurant equipment or other belongings. In the Café's last moments, the demolition workers hurriedly retrieved those photographs and artworks they could and handed them to the devastated owners. (The owners also own the Chit Chat Café on W. Manor Drive and the public is greatly encouraged to provide extra support for this also well-loved establishment. As of June 17, 11:30 a.m., \$32,556 has been raised for the owners on the Chit Chat GoFundMe page.)

As to the Pier – the star of countless grand stories from fisherfolk not just from Pacifica, but from all over the Bay Area and throughout the world – it remains closed to the public while the City continues to "evaluate site conditions and coordinate with engineers, contractors, and regulatory agencies regarding potential stabilization and repair measures." The area around the Pier is cordoned off, though countless individuals have come to stand within respectful view. Their comments travel a range of grief, doubt and hope, and of course, big fish tales.

But how could this happen to one of the City's most iconic symbols? There was no recent storm activity or 20-foot, or higher, swells slamming the 53-year-old pier. The answer is the aging structure has seen more than its share of long-term saltwater corrosion, pounding waves and delayed repairs and it has, quite literally, reached a breaking point.

At a press conference held Monday morning, June 15, near the Pier, Congressman Sam Liccardo, joined by Pacifica Mayor Christine Boles and Pacifica Councilmembers, announced he will seek federal aid to help stabilize and fund the long-term repairs.

"I know what a community asset this is," the Congressman said in a heartfelt speech. "We are going to rebuild. We are going to get the Pacifica Pier back – to stronger than it was. You have that commitment from me."

The Congressman is well aware of the Pier's previous closure for structural assessment and repair in January and February of 2024, following the Pier's battering by high tides and large waves on December 28, 2023. That event "damaged a section of the Pier's L-section (parallel to shoreline), concrete railing and far west piles." While the Pier did reopen, that area has been closed since. An annual condition assessment in 2023 reported that the "likely cost for completing structural repairs to the Pier, plus the Pier handrails, project design and construction management is estimated to be \$19M." The assessment additionally noted "the remaining area of the main pier is considered in poor condition and should be repaired within four years." That \$19M does not account for the most recent damage. (For another story – though Pacifica and Bay Area officials are well aware of it – there are separate funds needed for Pacifica's seawall project and/or the Beach Boulevard Infrastructure Resiliency Project – estimated in the \$80M range.)

As to immediate Pier action, the City is "working to stabilize the Pier by adding 150 boulders at the Pier's seawall connection." After that work is finished, City Manager Sean Charpentier said, "The City will consider two options: bracing the Pier from below with a pylon or removing it from the seawall to stabilize the first section of the structure." The City will provide additional updates on the Pacifica Pier as information becomes available: www.cityofpacific.org/pier.

* * *

The idea for a Pacifica fishing pier first came up through a citizen's committee in 1967-1968 and the plan was adopted in 1969. While the Pier was originally designed to serve as the support structure for the City's municipal sewer outfall line, Pacifica's then mayor, Grace McCarthy, was additionally strongly in favor of the pier because "it will draw tourists to the area."

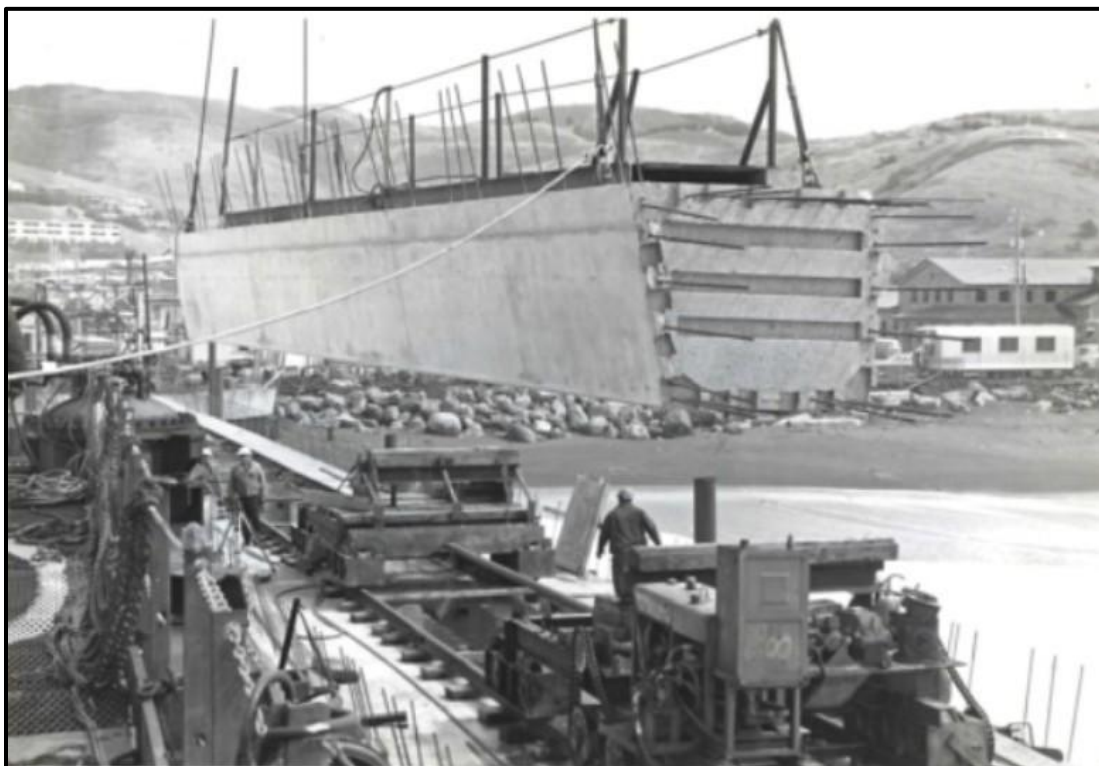
In December of 1972, *Skyline View*, the award-winning student-run newspaper of Skyline College in San Bruno, reported that the "construction of the Sharp Park fishing pier, sewage plant and outfall line has caused much controversy in Pacifica."

Student journalist Janet Burrious went on to write, "The future of the Sharp Park pier is still undecided and still in court with Judge Sweigert having the final word. As a result of the construction, four residents of the area are suing the city of Pacifica on the grounds that it will ruin the residential character of the neighborhood. One of the plaintiffs explained that they are fighting the location of the pier not the pier itself. They would like to see it moved from Santa Rosa Avenue to two blocks north."

That plaintiff feared, "with the completion of the project the area will become too commercialized, with added traffic, public toilets and snack shops, and it will be offensive to the people living across the street. We don't like to see creeping commercialism." In addition, the plaintiff voiced concern that the area would eventually be rezoned to a commercial area which would "eliminate all private homes."

That lawsuit did not come to fruition. The plaintiffs could not afford the bond to obtain a restraining order. But other Pacificans raised their voices against it as well, particularly those with concerns that it could blast the area with the stench of rotten eggs – a problem when treated wastewater meets trapped seaweed as well as the changing water levels of coastal currents. This malodorous-problem was known to come to fruition a number of times over the years. (The outfall was decommissioned after the City's new wastewater treatment plant – the Calera Creek Water Recycling Plant – began treating wastewater in August of 2000.)

In 1973, construction on the Pacifica Municipal Pier began. The initial cost of the entire project was estimated to be \$1,250,000, which was supported by grants from the State Department of Wildlife and Conservation, the Department of Interior and the Emergency Flood Relief. The City estimated they would pay approximately \$250,000.



Pacifica Pier construction, March 20, 1973. (Photo courtesy of the Pacifica Historical Society.)

On Wednesday, October 3, 1973, *The Coastside Chronicle* historian, Elizabeth St. Peter, reported: "*Outfall, fishing pier becomes a landmark.*"

"Rising out of the ocean near Beach Boulevard in Sharp Park is a magnificent concrete ocean fishing pier, all 1,140 feet of it," the historian began. "Beyond the pier at the ocean floor, deep sea divers are busy connecting the 1,400 foot ocean outfall line.

"This \$2,225,000 pier is expected to bring ocean fishermen from all over California and the world to Pacifica, especially now when there is a heavy run of striped bass.

"The pier stands astride wooden stilts put in place by a mechanical orange spider. This mobile engineering marvel was invented by Dick Smith, president of Healy Tibbitts, marine engineering firm which contracted to build the pier and outfall line.

"Herbert Hendershot, project engineer, adjusting his hard hat as he sat in the trailer next to the ocean at the end of the day said, "Time we're heading for is September 20."



This Pacifica Pier in-progress photo was taken on April 20, 1973. Workers were flown in by helicopter because a helicopter took 5 minutes to deliver the construction crew, whereas a boat on a heavy sea could delay the work, each way, by anywhere from 30 to 45 minutes. (Photo courtesy of the Pacifica Historical Society.)

On Saturday, November 10, 1973, Pacifica Mayor Aubrey Montagu Lumley officially dedicated the pier and sewage treatment plant. Fireworks were lit and Miss Pacifica, Teri Tenney, snipped the historic ribbon. With that, 1,000 anglers dashed across the fallen-ribbon line to hook the biggest catch. Among those anglers that day, was the man who became Pacifica's most famous, most treasured fisherman: Andy Pappas.



A native San Franciscan, Andy Pappas (1930-2024) caught his first fish when he was 9. It was a perch. He caught it behind San Francisco's Loop Lumber Company on 16th and 3rd where there was a pier. I know this about Andy because I interviewed him countless times when I wrote features for the *Pacifica Tribune*, and he was always a pure-joy and hilarious interview – and for my money, he will forever be the indelible voice of the Pacifica Pier. He learned something when he caught that first fish.

←Andy Pappas on his way to the Pier, 2016. (Jean Bartlett photo.)

"I learned from day one that whether you catch something or not, fishing or crabbing is peace of mind," Andy said. "And when you're older, you fish at all different times and get to see beautiful sunsets, beautiful moons and the stars at night. There is nothing like it."

In the Pacifica Historical Society's award-winning television series *Footprints of Pacifica* 2007 episode "History of the Pacifica Pier" – Andy discussed his memories of being among those anglers when the Pier gates opened in 1973.

"When it first opened, I remember the railing and walking out, the rings were all varnished and the hardwood was beautiful. Every other post had an electrical outlet on the bottom where you could plug in a radio or an electric stove and cook your crab and fish there. The water fountains all worked. All the benches were great. There were places to just sit and meditate and enjoy the Pier. Everything was smooth and beautiful. It was the glory of that time and I am sure we are going to get it back that way again."

Andy didn't move to Pacifica until 1967, when he and his wife Vivian bought their home overlooking the Pacific on Golden Bay Drive – often referred to as Pappas Point by locals. But he first met Pacifica in 1957. That's when his big brother Pete introduced Andy to fishing in Pacifica, and Pacifica remained for Andy, a top fishing pick.

"I used to fish right in front of Nick's Restaurant, one of my favorite places to fish."

"Hey, true story." The fisherman was known for his narrative segues. "One day I was fishing in Pacifica with my trademark red, white and blue on my fishing rod, and this whale came by and took the whole thing - line, reel and rod. So somewhere out there is a whale carrying the red, white and blue!"

Andy explained how he got the nickname, "Crab King."

"I got the name because my nephew Jim Pappas and I used to be out on the Pier around 2 o'clock in the morning. At that time, the Pier was open all night. We'd go five out of seven days a week and every day, my nephew and I were walking off the Pier at 6 or 7 in the morning with our limits, and people would say, 'There goes the Crab King.'"

In every interview I did with Andy, he always wanted to point out the rules of the Pier.

"Ten-bag limit for Dungeness crab and the minimum size is 5-3/4 inches. The red crabs, also known as rock crabs, can be four inches and you can catch a good amount, enough to feed your family. At the Pier you can keep the female crabs but most of us throw them back in the water. We want them to have a little hoochie coochie so there will always be plenty of crabs."

In addition he would note that while fishing on the Pacifica Pier is free, the Fish and Game officers visit frequently and check buckets and coolers. Not knowing the rules does not make one exempt from fines.

Once Andy moved to Pacifica, six years before the Pier was a reality, on occasion he would see Reverend Herschel Davis Harkins (1887-1977). The Reverend walked a great deal in West Sharp Park and Andy, of course, was in the neighborhood fishing directly off the beach. For decades, Rev. Harkins served as the pastor of the Little Brown Church and he was highly regarded throughout Pacifica as a beacon of the community. The Reverend, a father and a grandfather, lived with his wife Elizabeth at 65 San Jose Avenue in Sharp Park. He gave his last service at the Little Brown Church in 1968. On July 25, 1978, the Pacifica Municipal Pier was officially named the Reverend Herschel Harkins Memorial Pacifica Pier.

"I didn't really know him," Andy once said. "But I'll tell you, each time our pier was facing her troubles, I always hoped the Reverend was putting in a good word for her with the angels."

Andy's love for the Pacifica Pier never wavered and in fact grew stronger each time the Pier, quite literally, weathered any difficulty.

In early June of 1992, she was closed on and off for repairs. The outfall line had been slip lined back in 1989 with a heavy plastic pipe. That repair operation had been "tricky" and during it, the pipe broke and had to be clamped together. That left several gaps which subsequently leaked treated sewage and periodically allowed sand to "sweep in and clog the outfall." In late May of 1992, cranes and other equipment were set up at the end of the Pier. The goal was to "seal the hole with a plastic epoxy and encase the repaired section in concrete." During this process, the treated sewage had to be diverted from the outfall to allow the epoxy to seal properly. In addition, because large swells had a tendency to "suck the epoxy off," divers had to wait until the waters were calm. But the job got done. State Senator Quentin Kopp had used his political clout to raise money needed for the repairs. The Senator said of the Pier, "To me, it's a landmark of Pacifica."

In early September of 1999, the Pacifica Pier once again made local headlines. John Green reported for *The San Mateo County Times*.

"Built to hold a sewage pipe 26 years ago, the now-famous Pacifica Pier may close after next year when the sewer plant shuts down – to the dismay of nearly 50,000 fishermen and tourists who use the Pier each year. The problem is money: the millions probably needed to repair it, and the annual cost of maintaining it. The City of Pacifica hasn't committed to either maintenance or repair. One option is to tear the structure down, but Jim Jimno, owner of the Rusty Hook and the Pacifica Community Pier Bait Shop, thinks there might be a better alternative: make it a pay pier, forcing users to foot the cost of their recreation. In the meantime, the pier is free, and this is the time of the year when the Pacifica Pier really shines."

In July of 2000, Preserve Our Pier Supporters (POPS) was organized in Pacifica by Anna Boothe, president, Andy Pappas, vice president, and Cheryl Jimno (manager of the Pier Concession), secretary-treasurer. Their purpose, Anna explained, was to present concerts and other events to raise funds and awareness to repair the Pier, and they began with their first POPS concert at the Pier on Sunday, October 29. On that day, Andy also presented free tours of the Pier and introduced guests to his fishermen friends who were actually fishing. Along with the musical guests, Anna Boothe, who founded Pacifica's Poetry and Music Festival, read from her new book "Poems For The Pier." Invited guests included State

Senator Jackie Speier, who made the request for Pacifica's \$500,000 grant to begin emergency repairs on the Pier. That grant was achieved.

"This is not just a pier for Pacificans," Sen. Speier stated. "This is a pier that is used regionally by members of the fishing community from all over the Bay Area. I have been told that on any one day you will see 3,000 people out here using the Pier and on weekends, 8,000. That is a huge regional recreational activity and location that needs to be promoted. If we can get 1,000 salmon that were picked off this pier on one weekend in 1995, or so I've been told, maybe we should make it a historic landmark! It's remarkable. This is the only deep water fishing pier in the state. Now, grant it, it was created because it was an outfall location, but you were creative enough to make it into a place where our fishing community could really enjoy and benefit."

POPS subsequently filed for and achieved its nonprofit status.

"I had met Jackie Speier before POPS began," Anna said in the 2007 PHS "History of the Pacifica Pier" episode, "and Jackie said we should have a grass roots organization to support the Pier and get repairs when they are needed and so POPS was born."



Anna Boothe was a Midwesterner who moved to Pacifica in the late 1990s and fell in love with the City and its pier.

"It didn't take much time being present at the Pier to understand that constant storms and wind on the Pier means we will always have to restore it."

Anna Boothe had a background of teaching poetry at all levels – elementary, high school, college and adult. Her novel, "Coffeehouse" was the recipient of a PEN Working Writers grant. She also had a public relations background.

←Anna Boothe – publicity photo for a 2015 book signing at Florey's Books here in Pacifica.

"I have a master's degree in English language and literature from the University of Missouri where I studied with John Neihardt, the (1921) Poet Laureate of the State of Nebraska," Anna told this writer when I interviewed her for a book signing at Florey's Books in 2015. "I won a fellowship to Georgetown University where I worked with Michael Janeway, executive editor of The Atlantic Monthly. I additionally studied at the Instituto Allende (San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico) with San Francisco poet and editor Pierre DeLatre."

"Before POPS was formed, there was much talk in the City and with the City Council that the Pier should be demolished because of the expense of maintenance and all of the restoration that was needed," said Pacifica Historical Society President Emeritus Kathleen Manning. Kathleen would become the secretary and treasurer of POPS. "Anna was a farsighted individual who realized immediately what an asset the Pier was for Pacifica. With her public relations background, she launched the nonprofit POPS and began lobbying efforts to save the Pier and enlist help." (At that point, the Pier needed about \$5,000,000 in repairs.)

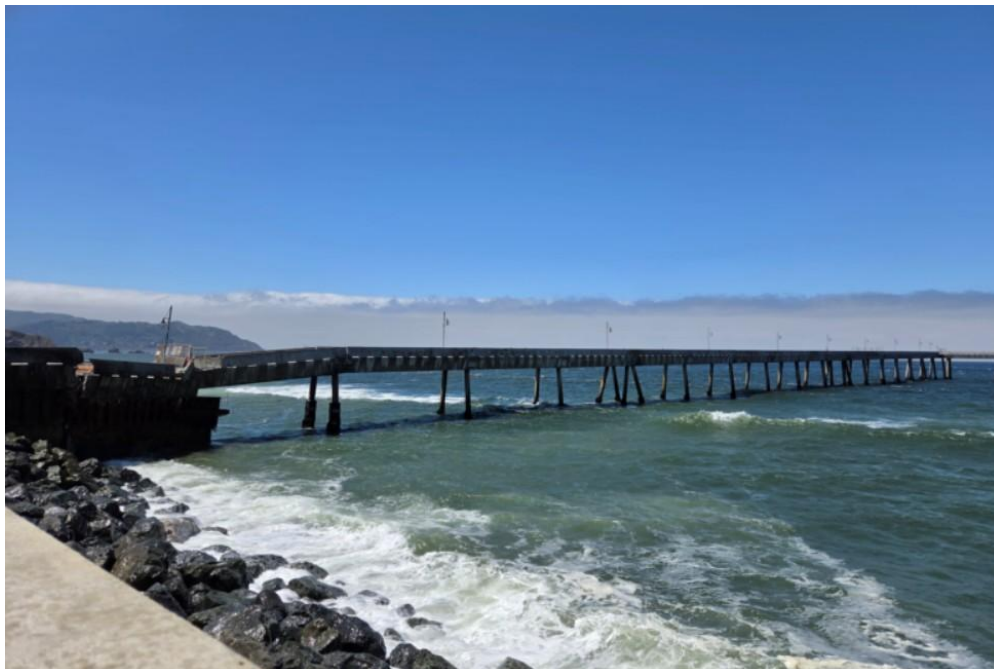
"She was at Council practically every session. She visited Sacramento. She saw to it that POPS had a website, photo contests and parties at the Pier. It takes determination and unwavering commitment to a cause to really get things done and Anna never gave up. Andy, the Crab King, took the POPS message to the Pier and greeted the fishermen every morning when the Pier opened, welcoming and helping everybody – which of course he had always done anyway – and inspired Pier goers to support POPS.

"Eventually the efforts paid off and the City received a grant of \$500,000 from the California Coastal Conservancy for Pier repairs, in addition to the extra funds collected by Andy and Anna as they walked the Pier and educated people on its needs. It was not enough for all the repairs needed but it was an extraordinary and successful effort by two individuals, Anna and Andy."

In November of 2020, Pacifica Mayor Deidre Martin recognized POPS with a City Proclamation, summarized here.

"Whereas, the nonprofit Preserve Our Pier Supporters (POPS) was started in 2000 to protect and support the Pier, with Anna Boothe, Andy Pappas, Kathleen Manning and Jean Johnston as original members; and Whereas the POPS members helped the City to secure important funding to preserve the Pier and assisted with educating the public on the Pier's importance, we, the Pacifica City Council proclaim the importance of the Pacifica Pier and the Pier Supporters."

Anna Boothe, who passed in 2018 at the age of 81, said of the Pier. "Let's unite as many visitors as we can to use our pier to fish, to walk and to escape land-bound air and to dissolve inhibitions by walking on water. Let's always raise money to fix up the Pier."



The Pacifica Pier, standing without its welcoming gateway, the Chit Chat Café, on January 14, 2026. (Jean Bartlett photo.)

* * *

By Jean Bartlett (© June 17, 2026)

Writer Jean Bartlett was recognized by the Board of Supervisors, County of San Mateo, for "her writing that connects community and preserves local history." She can be contacted through her website, www.bartlettbiographies.com. This story was sponsored by a group of Pacificans.