

## Hanson Bridgett Attys Showcase Musical, Culinary Passions

By James Mills

*Law360 (October 14, 2022, 4:13 PM EDT)* -- Given the long hours most attorneys devote to their day jobs, it can be hard to imagine finding the time to pursue passion projects like music or owning and managing a restaurant.

For a pair of Hanson Bridgett LLP attorneys in San Francisco, however, their pastimes will intersect this Friday as government affairs specialist Dave Miller brings his jazz trio to Giaco's Valley Roadhouse, a Marin County, California, restaurant owned by Miller's longtime colleague, litigator Andrew Giacomini.

"This will be a fun evening. Dave and his band are great. He's a great musician," Giacomini told Law360 Pulse in a recent interview. "This will be the second time Dave and his band have performed at the restaurant. The crowd really liked him the first time."

A large part of the crowd at that first performance consisted of Hanson Bridgett partners and staff. The same will likely be true on Friday.

"Dave and I use it as an opportunity to invite our partners and other people in our law firm to come out to my restaurant and listen to him play music," Giacomini said. "That way, we all get to see each other. Like a lot of businesses, people aren't going to the office as much, so this becomes a social occasion for us and our friends."

Miller is equally excited, as it offers him the chance to show off his piano skills while also spending time with Giacomini, whom Miller said he considers one of his closest friends. Even better, Miller's daughter Rebecca DuMaine will be performing vocals with the trio.

"I'm excited," Miller told Law360 Pulse. "It's great performing for friends and co-workers. It's great seeing [Giacomini] in an environment he seems to be thriving in. I love seeing him. And I love the fact that he has found his passion in the same way I've always had my passion in music."

The two have been close friends ever since Giacomini started at Hanson Bridgett in 1990. Giacomini used to hire the Dave Miller Trio to perform at parties at his house. So it was only natural that, after Giacomini took on the restaurant in early 2022 and began having live music, he invited Miller to perform there.



Dave Miller



Andrew Giacomini

"Dave is an amazing guy in lots of different ways," Giacomini said. "He's a great musician, and he's also one of my mentors in life — not just as a lawyer. He's taught me to do the things you love to do, and you make time for those things. We're kindred spirits around that type of stuff."

Visitors to Hanson Bridgett's office in San Francisco are often startled to see a baby grand piano in the reception area. The firm purchased the used instrument a few years back after years of renting pianos for office receptions and other gatherings. Giacomini, who served as the firm's managing partner for 19 years, from 2002 to 2020, often commissioned Miller to play the piano for those gatherings.

"Dave's such a good musician, why not have him play when we had receptions?" Giacomini said.

Miller has been with Hanson Bridgett for more than 50 years, having joined in 1970, when the firm had just a dozen attorneys. It has about 200 today.

"In those days, a firm with 12 in San Francisco was a medium-sized firm," Miller said. "By comparison, even a firm like [Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP] had less than 100 lawyers. At the time, 100 lawyers was a nightmarish thought."

Now semi-retired, Miller still practices government law, advising government agencies, especially transportation agencies. For much of his career, he served as chief counsel to the authority that operates the Golden Gate Bridge. He was also chief counsel for the CalTrain rail system.

In the mid-'80s, he served a four-year stint as Hanson Bridgett's managing partner.

"I was doing a full-time practice plus running the office, which had about 50 lawyers at that point," Miller said. "It became impossible to do both jobs."

Miller said his own time in the role sparked admiration for the 19 years that Giacomini spent in the managing partner position.

"Andrew was masterful in his performance," Miller said. "It's not just a question of duration, but the quality of his work and the growth he helped create and the culture that he continued to maintain as we grew. He did it for two decades. While his practice wasn't full-time, there were years where, as a litigator, he wound up doing a lot of work. It's a wonderful opportunity, but it's also extremely demanding."

Giacomini joined the firm in 1990 shortly after graduating from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law. He specializes in real estate and construction litigation, bolstered by firsthand experience from working his way through law school while also holding a construction job.

Since stepping down as firm managing partner, Giacomini has made several real estate and construction investments. When he learned that Two Bird Cafe, a 40-year-old restaurant just five minutes from his house in San Geronimo, was for sale, he jumped at the chance to buy it.

"I always wanted to operate a restaurant," Giacomini said. "This just came along in my life. It was serendipity. There it was. So, I [said], 'I guess I'm going to do this now.'"

Giacomini, who also worked as a waiter to pay for law school, said he's always dreamed of owning a

restaurant. His only hesitation in taking on the venture was that, in his dreams, the restaurant he envisioned was fairly small, and the restaurant now named Giaco's Valley Roadhouse, which seats around 130 people, is anything but.

Serving California cuisine, Giaco's is popular in the area and gets a strong tourist crowd on weekends. Adjacent to the restaurant is a five-room inn that Giacomini is in the process of renovating.

Giacomini said he updated the menu with some of his favorite recipes, started using locally sourced ingredients, and added a full bar selection, plus began having live music on weekends.

While a manager and chef handle the day-to-day operations, Giacomini still checks in regularly and fills in for any role as needed. He said he particularly loves serving as host on weekends, which gives him a chance to chat with the patrons.

"I've always gotten a lot out of giving to others," Giacomini said. "And that's part of what you do when you're in the restaurant business — you're providing a night on the town for people. That should be memorable. If it is, then you're doing your job."

While Giacomini said he loves practicing law, being a restaurateur is giving him a different creative outlet.

"I'm a grinder," he said. "When you're doing something you love, whether it's the law or working in a restaurant or singing in a band, it's not really that hard."

And Miller, who has put out multiple albums with his Dave Miller Trio, is glad to see his friend so happy in the restaurant business.

"I think that's the connection that he wants," Miller said. "We are both passionate about our firm and our practices, but are passionate about having a life outside of the firm where we are doing things that contribute in various ways to hopefully make people feel better while doing things we like."

--Editing by Alanna Weissman.