

November 2022



Just Sit Right Back and You'll Hear a Tale, a Tale of a Fateful Trip



By Ben Lee

When I think of November, I think of giving thanks. I am thankful for my friends, my family, the roof over my head and the food in my fridge. I am also enormously thankful for no longer being seasick back on that rickety boat in the middle of the Indian Ocean. But I digress. Here's what happened: back in 2020 when we were in the thick of the pandemic, an old friend had a fantasy plan of taking a surf trip to Indonesia. He was all fired up to take this once-in-a-lifetime adventure and what better time to do it since we were all stuck at home anyway? We'd be headed to a spot in the middle of nowhere, so Covid wasn't too much of a concern. Back then, it was fairly easy to get flights and reservations (wonder why!) and it felt like a pretty spectacular thing to do. The text chain was populated by a bunch of us guys: friends since we were 13 and now on the brink of middle-aged. The majority of us work in real estate so we could conceivably talk shop and conduct business from the boat, even though we'd be so far from home. There we'd be: friends and surfers for decades, out on the open seas, having an experience we'd never forget. Excitable texts with dozens of details regarding all the intricacies of this trip pinged day and night. We were doing it! We were going! We were crazy but up for making a memory, regardless of how Herculean an effort it would soon prove to be.

We found out that Covid precautions were actually incredibly high in Indonesia and before booking the trip, we were told we would have to quarantine for two weeks in a hotel before even beginning the surfing part of the journey. So, the original 17-day trip nearly doubled in length and that was a very long time to be away from home in the midst of a pandemic.

One by one, the other guys' interest levels started to wane. The longer we had to think about being out on a boat for so long, away from civilization (and medical staff just in case one of us needed anything), the more we all started to reconsider the fun-factor of what was originally talked about when we were stuck indoors with our lovable families during that prolonged period of the pandemic. At the time, nothing sounded more freeing than being on a boat with buddies enjoying perfect surfing conditions off the coast of Indonesia. But reality started to sink in that maybe it wasn't the smartest thing to do.

Eventually, the world opened up a bit and everyone started returning to their pre-pandemic lives. Once in a while, the group text would resume and we chatted about maybe trying to go again if the rigid restrictions eased up. But then we'd lose steam again. What started off in 2020 as 12 guys very excited about a surf trip adventure diminished to just three guys in 2022 and I was not one of them. My friend Justin was on board and he persisted in trying to convince me to go. Justin and I surf together often in LA and I knew if I was going to have fun, it would be with him but I was still vacillating about it. I reviewed the pros and cons with my wife and boys. They said to go. I chatted about it with relatives, friends, doctor friends, work associates and my real estate team. They all said to go (unless they were all just sick of me wondering out loud to everyone who'd listen!). Finally, it was my friend and surf buddy Reza who basically summed it up in a way that really hit home. He said, "You're not getting any younger and you're not going to be physically up for a trip like this for that much longer. If you're ever going to do it, do it now."

So, I gathered my courage and about a week before the boat was supposed to set sail, I decided to go. It took about two days to get

there: LA to Tokyo to Jakarta with layovers in between. Then we boarded a small plane that took us from Jakarta to Padang. From there we got on a boat that sailed roughly ten hours from shore and would serve as our makeshift home for the next two weeks. A 14 hour time difference from LA and no cell service (I rented a satellite phone but even that coverage was limited). I knew three other guys going. The rest of the passengers were strangers but not for long. Nothing like severe seasickness that lasted for days to really bond you. We basically slept in the same room that consisted of tight rows of bunk bed cots, each with the bare minimum of bedding. The guy who had the bunk across from mine snored so aggressively that in order to attempt to get any sleep, I had to seek comfort with a hard bench up on deck. That was particularly fun when the rainstorm hit and not only was I seasick, homesick, jet-lagged and thoroughly exhausted, but now soaking wet, too.

And just about the time when we finally started acclimating to the rocking boat and the relentless seasickness started to subside, well friends... that's when the food poisoning hit. I don't know exactly what it was that we ate and I don't even really want to think about it because that's one memory I'm happy to erase from my mind. But one by one we each succumbed to what I can only describe as Satan taking up residence in our bodies. No one was spared: the huge snorer, his 13 year old kid, the Australian chain-smokers, Justin, me- even some of the crew members were knocked down with the devil's poison. I must've lost five pounds in two days. If we weren't at least 8 hours from civilization, I might have called it quits and tried to find a flight home or at least a hotel room with a hot shower and comfy bed.

But a day or so later, just like the sea itself, the tide of this trip started to turn and

thankfully, after those few rough days, we started having fun. The surf conditions were the best, most pristine you could imagine. Places I had only dreamed about were now in my front view: Hollow Trees, Telescopes, Crocodiles and Icelands in addition to a bunch of smaller spots that were even farther off the beaten path. At Macaronis I surfed the best wave in my life: a deep backside tube that was as close to perfection as anything I've ever experienced. All my initial fears about coming on this trip faded away and I was solely focused on what I came to do:

surf the most perfect waves in uncrowded, crystal clear waters, with friends to share in this remarkable, unforgettable journey. Despite the long, arduous road to get there, despite the minimal rough patches of reef and deadly sea snakes lurking in various areas below the surface, I have to say—the idyllic surfing far outweighed the negatives.

Now that I'm back on dry land and the world has stopped rocking and I'm over the jet lag and my small wounds have healed, I feel especially thankful this November that I had the courage to take a trip this far out of my comfort zone. I'm thankful that my team took care of the real estate business while I was out of cell range and I'm thankful I could rely on my wife to take care of our boys while I was so far away. Truthfully, I'm thankful to no longer be sick on a boat and grateful that I made it back in one piece. But most of all, I'm thankful that you can travel halfway across the world, see incredible sights and experience phenomenal things but, at the end of the day, I'm thankful to be reminded of what Dorothy has said all along: there's no place like home.

I hope you have a very happy and healthy and hearty Thanksgiving holiday. Best wishes from my family to yours.

My featured listings

Cheviot Hills Dream Home - BEST LOCATION IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD!

This three-level home that includes an elevator, swimming pool, spa, movie theater and the best view of Rancho Park golf course imaginable.



10422 Lorenzo Pl. - \$9,295,000
6 Beds/8 Bath 6,600 +/- Sq. Ft., 8,100 Sq. Ft. Lot

FIRST OPEN HOUSE Sunday November 13, 1-4 pm

Featuring an Ice Cream Party, free giveaways and fun for the whole family!

Mar Vista - FOR SALE!

Cheviot Hills - SOLD! Off market pocket listing.

Cheviot Hills - SOLD! Off market pocket listing.



3430 Barry Ave \$2,998,000
4 Beds/4 Bath - 3,635 Sq. Ft., 6,009 Sq. Ft. Lot



3161 Ivy Glen Way \$2,475,000
3 Beds/2.5 Bath - 1,920 Sq. Ft., 7,704 Sq. Ft. Lot



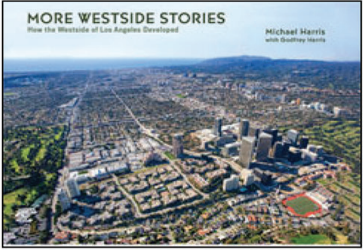
3142 Dannyhill Dr \$4,850,000
5 Beds/6 Bath - 4,236 Sq. Ft., 8,707 Sq. Ft. Lot

Cheviot Hills happenings

The Reviews Are In!

By Ben Lee

My father-in-law Michael Harris's third book, *More Westside Stories*, was just reviewed by the US Review of Books and it's a rave! Please see what the critics are saying about this book which was written by Michael before he passed away and completed by his brother Godfrey. I think he'd be very proud to see how well it's being received. Please see the review and if you are interested in ordering a copy for the Westsider in your life, please reach out to Godfrey Harris: hmg@mac.com



More Westside Stories: How the Westside of Los Angeles Developed
by Michael Harris with Godfrey Harris
The Americas Group

book review by Priscilla Estes

"Enjoy the journey with us from the Westside's past into a glimpse of its future."

The Harris brothers share one hundred fascinating years of Los Angeles' Westside history. Born and raised in Westside's Cheviot Hills, the authors are uniquely qualified to trace its evolution from semiarid farms and ranches to a sparkling cultural and entertainment oasis. This striking coffee table book provides not just a litany of facts and figures but an entertaining, illustrated, and star-studded evolutionary narrative that animates the people, elements, and events that transformed the region. It benefited from forward-thinking real estate entrepreneurs and the outsized roles of golf and film studios, while dealing with the complexities of transportation and water supplies.

Major players' names appear in bold type, which enables perusal or a quick skim. Well-organized content, a table of illustrations, and thorough index help pinpoint areas of interest, such as famous people, movie studios, and why the Westside and LA proper never merged. Especially interesting is the transportation section, which explains how its topography and congestion make Westside uniquely suited for self-driving cars. Stretching 180 square miles from the Pacific Ocean to La Brea Avenue and from the Santa Monica Mountains to the Los Angeles airport (LAX), the Westside is also a potential testing ground for Elon Musk's Hyperloop technology, which whisks cars underground at speeds of 600 to 1,000 miles per hour.

The authors establish the Westside as much more than "seven suburbs in search of a city," as *New Yorker Magazine* critic Alexander Woolcott put it, especially when the suburbs are Beverly Hills, Culver City, Inglewood, Malibu, Pacific Palisades, Santa Monica, West Hollywood, and Westwood. Westside comes alive as a vibrant community created by the "Big Bang" of real estate, racism, anti-Semitism, air pollution, transportation, shopping, tourism, and the golf and entertainment industries. Third in a series of Westside stories, this captivating, heartfelt, and delightfully readable reference is a must on anybody's coffee table.

No on ULA!



By Ben Lee

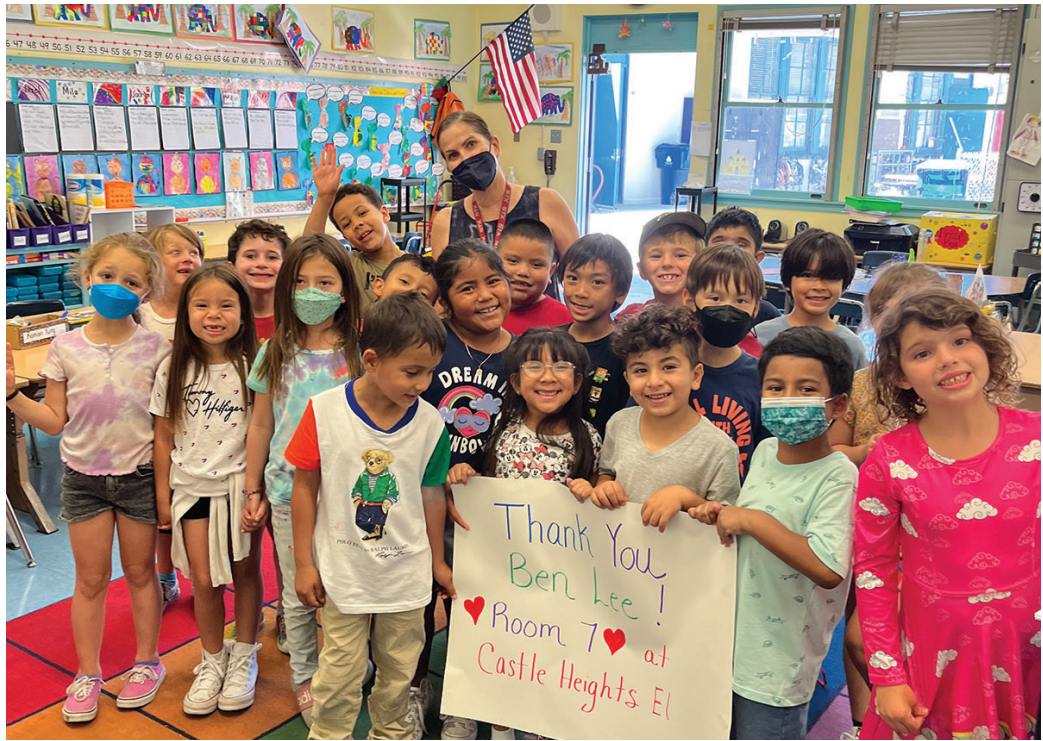
I don't often get political and I encourage you to do your own research and come to your own conclusion as to how to vote on Measure ULA in the upcoming elections. It is my opinion that this measure should not be passed and I will be voting a resounding 'No.' Los Angeles voters have already passed numerous ballot measures to fund ways to address the homeless problem in our city. This is yet another attempt to get money from us without any proof the city will spend it in an intelligent way. Billions of dollars are sitting in a fund and nothing has been done to solve the homeless problem so instead of taxing the selling of real estate properties even

more than it already does, why not take the billions it already has and use that to solve the problem? If you are unaware of what ULA is, it basically is an additional tax on properties valued over five million dollars that sellers would have to pay upon selling or transferring the home. Sellers already pay a tax and this measure would increase the cost by millions. And if you think only rich people are affected by this, you'd be wrong. When landlords sell a building, they'd have to pay the increased tax and who has to make up for that deficit? Most likely the renters who are already stretched thin. Both Karen Bass and Rick Caruso have spoken out about this measure and neither support it. I hope you join me in voting No on ULA!

RAFFLE

It was so much fun to give away the Amazon cards to benefit teachers! Winner Cathy Glueck won the raffle and shared the gift cards with two teachers from Castle Heights. Here's a great picture of Ms. LaBelle and her happy class of first graders. Our October raffle was for \$50 worth of candy to pass out on Halloween. Congratulations to Judy Folsoi! You are the lucky winner and I hope all your trick-or-treaters enjoyed the tasty treats. For November we are skipping the raffle because

this month you are ALL winners! Keep an eye out for our annual holiday gift that will be distributed a week before Thanksgiving. Every house in Rancho Park, Beverlywood and Cheviot Hills should get one. If for whatever reason your house is accidentally skipped, give me a call 310-704-6580 or send an email: ben@benleproperties.com and please let me know that you didn't receive your gift. We'll get one out to you immediately. Hope you like it!



You're Invited!

By Ben Lee

Please join us for delicious King Kone ice cream; fun, free gifts and the chance to be among the first to see one of the most beautiful new homes in the neighborhood! 10422 Lorenzo in Cheviot Hills is a brand new home that was just completed and is ready to make its debut. 6 bedrooms, 8 bathrooms, 6600 +/- square feet that spans three levels and includes

an elevator, swimming pool, spa, movie theater and the best view of Rancho Park golf course imaginable. I hope you will stop by 10422 Lorenzo on Sunday November 13th from 1-4pm. I'll be there with my family and I hope to see you with yours! Any questions, please give me a call: 310-704-6580 or send me an email: ben@benleproperties.com I look forward to seeing you there!

