

LIVING Brentwood

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CLARE AND MITCH DAVIS

Their eventful and illuminating lives



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Clare and Mitch Davis

Navigating the planned and the unplanned events with gratitude

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In the summer of 1991, two teenagers held internships at two different record labels — one at Champion Entertainment, and the other at Arista — the label The Grateful Dead signed with in '77. Nineteen-year-old Clare Davis (née Britell) was then in her sophomore year at Mills College in Northern California, and lived in New York that summer for her internship. Mitch Davis, New York native and son of Arista's CEO, Clive Davis, was a Deadhead like Clare, and the pair made a concert their first date.

"We were friends off and on," Clare recalls. A double-major in child development and studio art, she still had graduate school and a career to pursue. The timing wasn't right for her and Mitch until a decade later. "The way things start out aren't always indicative of where they end up," Mitch quips.

"We bumped into each other at an Indian restaurant in Santa Monica," Clare goes on. "The lights dimmed and there was a spotlight on Mitch. He walked slowly over to me and said... 'What are you doing in LA?'"



It was a fair question. Clare grew up in Washington, D.C. in a large Irish-Catholic family. She is one of four children. "I always had family around," she reflects. "My dad worked in government, and my mom was a working mom. She has eight siblings, so I was surrounded by aunts and uncles and cousins." It was a fun, boisterous environment that Clare later swapped for Northern California — and New York for a summer — and eventually Los Angeles.



While working at a preschool in LA, Clare happened to teach Steven Spielberg's children, and the well-known director convinced her to earn her Master's in Child Development, and work exclusively for the Spielberg family. "I traveled the world with them," Clare says, adding that Spielberg set her on the path to her current business.

"When Mitch and I got serious," she recalls, "Steven told me to talk to every de-

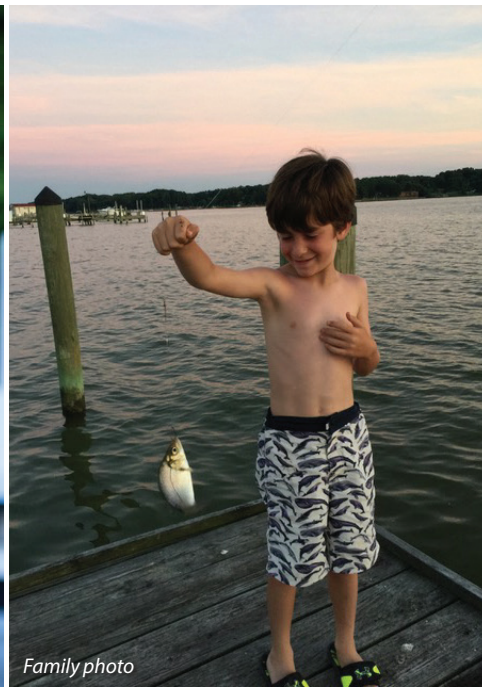
partment head at DreamWorks to figure out what I wanted to do. I met Chip Sullivan, a special events guru, and I was mesmerized."

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Chip connected Clare with Wolfgang Puck, and she worked for five years coordinating personal and business events, restaurant

openings, catering, and public relations for the global brand.

After that, Clare began working for the "Grandam of events," Carleen Cappalatti at AEG. The events industry veteran encouraged Clare to start her own company, and Carleen would provide the contacts to get the business off the ground. "That's how Harper Sloane Productions was born," Clare says. The company, named after Clare and Mitch's



Family photo



two children, has coordinated social events from weddings and baby showers to celebrity charities and award ceremonies. Clare says it is thanks to her incredible mentors and employees that the company has grown and designed events in luxury hotels and private estates in California, New York, Florida, Italy and London — including charity events for Goldie Hawn and Gwyneth Paltrow.

Recently, Clare was tasked with recreating the London Royal Opera House in LA for clients who wanted people to “feel the grandeur and experience seeing the opera and

ballet in a setting that is truly magnificent.” In addition to expressing her creative self through Harper Sloane Productions, Clare

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says she enjoys helping clients develop the idea behind their event, and have their guests walk away with a certain sentiment or feeling.

Meanwhile, Mitch remained connected to the music industry after that internship at Arista back in ‘91. The Brandeis University

and Cardozo Law School graduate works in music management, producing concerts and events with high profile musicians.

Recently, however, his attentions have shifted toward the relaunched, premium candle brand Illuminations. “Illuminations is a formerly successful, acclaimed brand that was shut down after being picked up by Yankee Candle,” Mitch explains. “Relaunching it has been an exciting ride.”

Originally only a fan of the scented candles, Mitch says he endeavored to reignite the brand’s success by relying on Illuminations’





classic fragrances, introducing new ones, and becoming more direct-to-consumer. The candles are made with coconut and apricot wax that are environmentally friendly, clean burning, responsibly packaged, and made in the U.S. “It’s exciting to build a quality product,” Mitch says, “while maintaining the unique characteristics of the products that came before.”

Though Illuminations is his current focus, Mitch says he still keeps a foot in the music industry. He produces concerts for events such as the Long Beach Grand Prix, and at the time of our interview, is preparing for rapper Pitbull to perform for a client. Harper Sloane Productions events often benefit from Mitch’s connections as well.

The Harper of Harper Sloane Productions is Harper Davis, who was born in 2007 — more than a trimester early. “He was a micro-preemie,” Clare explains, “he weighed less than a pound.” The ensuing health issues and extended hospital stay were an overwhelming and monumental period for the new parents. “I’ve always been a sprinter,” Clare says. “If there’s a problem I can fix quickly, I’ll do it. Marathons are harder for me. Harper’s

challenges were like a marathon.” Harper had heart surgery when he was a day old, and then his lungs wouldn’t take in oxygen. He was on supplemental oxygen for ten months, but that affected the blood vessels in his eyes, causing them to swell. “Every single thing was so heartbreaking,” Clare says of watching Harper fight each day, recalling the pain of seeing new moms wheeled out of the hospital with healthy babies in their arms.

“Oddly enough,” she continues, “we knew four other couples in the NICU at the same time. We all had boys — another preemie, one with a heart issue, the other with a brain issue. To this day, we are still really good friends. That was the saving grace of all of it because no one else can really understand what we went through.”

“The challenges our kids endured really bonded us,” Mitch agrees. He recalls what it was like seeing a friend unexpectedly in the NICU — worried over his own baby just like Mitch was. “It was very humbling,” he says, “knowing that any parent — young, old, from all walks of life — could go through something similar.” In the end, he says, that feeling of empathy extended to all parents

in similar circumstances. "Having a child endure adversity so early made me appreciate so much in life," he adds. "Harper is doing fantastically now, but we keep working to make sure he is set up for health and happiness."

Today, Harper is thriving. "He cares very much about diversity and making sure everyone is respected," Mitch says.

"He's a little warrior," Clare adds with a grin. "While he is small for his age, he is still so determined and easy to smile. Everyone roots for him." Harper plays point for his travel basketball league, and his coach — arguably one of Harper's biggest fans — has said that while Harper may not be the best on the team, he makes the whole team better. "He has quite a spirit," Clare says.

Sloane Davis was born three years after Harper, with no complications. Dad says she is passionate about protecting the world's oceans and natural resources. "Sloane is spit and vinegar," Clare says. "She's a rough-and-tumble girl — Harper's protector, champion, and also his biggest competition." The ten-year-old plays defense on her basketball team and trains with Harper — doing sit-ups and running around the track — usually with her curly hair flying wildly behind her.

The Davis family has lived in Brentwood for Sloane's whole life — ten years — and say that it's the perfect nook in which to raise a family. "There's a great sense of community in Brentwood," Mitch says. "We have wonderful neighbors and there's so much to do — all within walking and biking distance." But it's also important to them to keep geographically distant family in the picture, so they vacation every summer to visit Clare's kin, and Grandpa Clive visits at least once a month.

We don't see family as 'extended,'" Mitch clarifies. His three siblings are also married with children and remain involved in their brother's life. "The binds that tie us are very strong," he says with a smile.

"My family has a house in Southern Maryland," Clare continues, "so we go down to the Chesapeake once a year. All the differ-

ent generations get together, and cousins teach cousins how to drive a tractor, how to waterboard, how to crab. The kids love it." Next month the family of four will head to Miami for Clive's 88th birthday. The loving grandfather has made Sunday night dinner mandatory for years, making sure his four kids and grandchildren hold to that tradition when everyone is together.

After 16 years of marriage, Mitch and Clare are still going to concerts, and have passed

on their music and entertainment passion to Harper and Sloane. "Going to Stagecoach or Broadway shows or different events along those lines creates special memories that make the world unique for Harper and Sloane," Mitch says. "It breeds an appreciation for culture and the arts in a fun way."

"It definitely runs in the family," Clare says. "People who play together, stay together — and there's a lot of love of the arts in our family."



Family photo