

# THE GOOD LIFE AT JACKSON CLAY

It's one of those brilliant blue and beautiful days in Southern California, and I'm standing in the shade across from Lisa Kline Kids in Los Angeles talking with Emmy-Award winning actor Martin Sheen about his new favorite venture, Jackson Clay, Inc. "You'd know about this line if you'd had kids," he says. "You'd be scrambling to get these clothes. I love bragging about it, because it's such fun."

Martin and his wife Janet are partners with Paula Speert and Paige Apar in the company Paula and Paige founded in 2001 to design and manufacture Jackson Clay USA, a popular line of clothing for boys. Later this July the foursome is debuting Jackson Clay Couture, their collection for girls. "Jackson Clay USA was born out of the necessity to have good looking clothing for boys. I remember – not just with my kids, but with my grandkids – how difficult it is to find anything to fit the lads - OK, now we're surrounded..."—??

Right then he spots two paparazzi flanking our little group, clicking away. Such a Hollywood moment! As he and Paula mug for the cameras – having a ball, with all of us enjoying it – Martin calls one photographer over to explain what he is doing standing on the sidewalk in front of a children's boutique. He tells her exactly about Jackson Clay USA, how he's showing off the line. "Do you have children?" he asks her. Photographer Lisa answers no to Martin, and points out the other paparazzi as her husband, Colin. "Perhaps you can talk to him, and convince him we need to start." Naturally, Colin is beckoned over and Martin charms him, too. "He's trying to talk you into having some kids," Paula's husband Jokton tells Colin. We all laugh and connect through the comedy.

Turns out that Lisa and Colin, from England, are married for 19 years. Don't know if Martin persuades them to try for children, yet he absolutely convinces them to take pictures of him surrounded by all the cute models wearing Jackson Clay, with a round of thanks and handshakes to boot. Later, I ask







Paige how Martin came to get involved personally with the publicity of the company. "Simple," she says. "Of all the partners, he is the most qualified for the job." Touché!

This day in the life of Jackson Clay is exactly what Paige describes as the good life. "This area is known for its rather high concentration of natural beauty, wealth and celebrity often associated with glamour and good living," she says. "Jackson Clay is a Southern California company influenced daily by the local aesthetic." In fact, the garment that launched the company is called the "after-pool pant." All this sun, playfulness and good living are what Paula hopes "little boys are doing when they are wearing Jackson Clay!"

Indeed. After the paparazzi pics, all the models including Paige's son – Jackson, the company's namesake – immediately grab some chalk, start drawing pictures and playing right on the sidewalk in the warm SoCal sun. The line is known for its all-American looks in durable cottons, denim, French Terry and corduroy with the softest hand, for comfortable clothes that little guys also look pretty cool in. Jackson Clay USA also boasts innovative design elements like the 5-ply knee, reinforced with layers of printed fabric that reveal themselves through wear and tear of the pants while protecting the boys' knees.

"I think most kid's clothing designers are inspired by their own children because they are very passionate about them,"

Paula says. "In my case, I was actively looking for comfortable boys clothing to take on a family vacation and the pickings were slim! We felt there was gap in the market, a void to be filled." Paige can't imagine who would have a better sense of their children's likes and needs "than a parent who does the laundry." So this laundry-doing parent designed the cargo release pocket with a zipper at the bottom, for an easy empty before any laundry incidents occur. Convertible hems and waistlines let the garments grow with the child and reversible t-shirts flip over to fresh, if junior spills his lunch on himself and won't be home until after dinner. They say they actually weave "heart and soul" into every garment. "Every garment we produce represents my passion for this company, and in a





sense, my heart and soul," Paige says. It could be argued that the line has re-invented the way little guys get gussied up. Paige says there are stories of boys wearing Jackson Clay clothes for days at a time. "Some customers report that they actually have to hide the clothes." Paula thinks perhaps it's the fact that the boys can be super comfortable while looking really stylish, too.



If Martin were a little charmer again, what would he want to wear? "Lots of the pieces are so appealing, they're on an adult level of style, but they're also very, very practical." He points to the cargo release pockets or the nifty rings on pant fronts as places where the name of the child or a picture of a parent, some identification could be attached. "You know a Mother's hand is at work here in the design."

These partners are a fab four. For Paula and Paige, it's a great sense of accomplishment as the longtime friends bring out the best in each other. Paula says, "The clothing line would look completely different without one of us." The two chose a strong, all-American name for the brand, one that Paige has learned from her travels sounds good in every language. For Martin and Janet, being part of Jackson Clay is a way for them to invest in something they are proud of and to create a family business, too. Their granddaughter Cassandra is the daughter of Paula and son Charlie Sheen. She recently graduated from college with a major in theatre and a mind for costume design.

Paige says the entire group "has the chance to create something good and meaningful." And international. Martin would like to donate a portion of his proceeds to charity, "not surprising considering his longtime humanitarian efforts," says Paula. It was Janet who first suggests that Martin take part in the company's publicity efforts, because the two want to help in building the brand. The Jackson Clay USA logo is inspired by the trademarks of the 20s and 30s as a seal of approval. In designing it, Paige anticipated a wide range of uses and says, "it now has become a mark of quality and good taste." And they plan to use all of it – celebrity, publicity, advertising, the Internet, trade shows and markets – to build the brand big.

Big is what surprises Martin most about the children's wear industry, "that it's so huge. I didn't have a clue. When I lived in New York the only publication that had any credibility at all was Women's Wear Daily and we only knew about that because they had a top drama critic, and they would review plays! In those days women's clothing was the thing in midtown Manhattan. You saw the latest designs flying down the streets on racks. And David Dubinsky was heading the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), so that was our



association, it was the liberal party, always supporting the candidates for labor and women rights and liberties...that was just a natural progression for me. It was as close as I got to the apparel industry...until now."

"In the apparel industry, the least amount of overall dollars is spent on our boy customer," Paula says, "meaning that infant, girls, tweens, teens and adult clothing take in much more money." And even though Paige's insight is that the concept of disposable boys clothing is no longer de rigeur, that boy children are as adored, loved and spoiled as girl children, Paula maintains that for their target customer, price is extremely important. "This is one of the main reasons why we want our clothes to be affordable to the average department store customer."

Jackson Clay is selling their fourth season of Jackson Clay USA with the Spring '08 collection and is introducing a collection for girls called Jackson Clay Couture at ENK Children's Club. Similar to the boy's collection, the line features dresses, tank tops, pants and skirts in fabrics from denim to knits to soft poplins. In development is J-Play, a more casual and trendier but still comfortable line for boys seven and older. The partners are also brainstorming on a special J-Play campaign for worldwide peace- "We will always promote positive images on our clothes," says Paula.

Martin is scheduled to visit Children's Club on July 31, perhaps other days, too. "I'm going to go on a diet and start working out again and see if I can get in to some of those clothes. Now wouldn't that be ideal - to see me wearing that clothing line!?" Seriously, though, he's jazzed about meeting his customers so he's signing autographs and taking pictures. They'll also continue to write Fall 07 orders for customers that haven't placed one yet, and will have presence in Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Dallas and Atlanta in August.

"If a retailer wants a strong boy customer base, then they must carry Jackson Clay," Paula says. "The retailers tell us exactly what to do with our lines by what they choose to buy from us. The ones that have brought our line into their stores are selling well."

When people ask Paula what it takes to run a successful apparel company, she tells them they need three things: money, time and knowledge. For Jackson Clay it's



Paula and Paige, Martin and Janet. And their husbands. And their kids. Their grandkids. And their reps - their retailer partners, too. The customers. And the glorious California lifestyle. Paparazzi helps, too - so would a company theme song. Paula starts singing A Beautiful Day by U2. "It's a beautiful day with Jackson Clay..."

*-written by Janet Gray Muniz. ©*



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