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Homeless to Homebuilder

Richard Montañó rises from the street to a lofty perch in the real estate industry **PG.12**

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-Ronald Judy, Co-founder Nintendo of America and Founder NES International (Nintendo in Europe)

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COVER STORY



ON THE COVER:

From Homeless to Homebuilder

Once homeless and living with an abusive mother, Richard Montaña turned his life around to become a successful real estate industry executive, owning Montaña Companies, three real estate investment groups that allow people to generate passive income by owning property. His mission is simple: Give people a way to create more free time by giving them a way to build wealth without slaving away at a desk. See Page 12.



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Pacific Building Group Reaches its Pearl Anniversary

Thirty years in business is no small feat. It requires constant innovation, weathering economic downturns and building a company culture that inspires and attracts a passionate team. For San Diego-based general contracting firm Pacific Building Group, the journey started out of the back of a pickup truck. Pictured: the principals, Jim Roherty and Greg Rogers.



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New Car Review: 2015 Hyundai Genesis

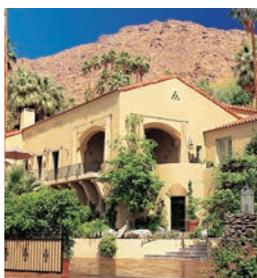
The 2015 Genesis is Hyundai's second-largest sedan, not quite as big as the dreadnought Equus sedan, but noticeably bigger (and more opulently equipped as it sits) than a Caddy CTS, BMW 5 or Mercedes E — and only slightly smaller (outside) than a Lexus LS460, but very comparably equipped, and just as roomy inside, for a lot less money.



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Bali Hai – Serving Aloha Spirits for 60 Years

A staple on San Diego's dining scene since 1954, the Bali Hai Restaurant, originally "The Hut," is celebrating 60 years in operation this November. Opened by San Diego restaurateur Tom Ham, the restaurant was Shelter Island's first "tiki temple," and is one of the largest remaining original tiki temples in the United States.



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Travel: An Idyllic Weekend in the Desert

The Willows Historic Palm Springs Inn was built as a luxurious private home in 1925 and remained so until Tracy Conrad and Paul Marut opened its doors to their first guests in 1996. There are only eight rooms but each has its own unique history. If you're like the two of them were then and looking for an idyllic weekend in the desert, make your first call to The Willows.

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SAN DIEGO SCENE



Downtown San Diego to Get Luxury Hotel

The Robert Green Company and Montage Hotels & Resorts are breaking ground today on Downtown San Diego's newest hotel -- Pendry San Diego, a 12- story high-rise that will offer 317 guest rooms, including 36 suites.

The hotel will be on J Street, between Fifth and Sixth avenues.

Scheduled to open in 2016, Pendry San Diego will include a rooftop pool, two restaurants, ultra-lounge, a beer hall, a spa and energizing fitness facility, and over 22,000 square feet of meeting space.

The Robert Green Company is a privately held real estate development company headquartered in Encinitas. It was founded by Robert S. Green Jr. more than 15 years ago.

Montage Hotels & Resorts is a hotel and resort management company founded by Alan J. Fuerstman.

Rendering of the Pendry San Diego.

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Carlsbad Company Among Firms Getting FAA Exemption To Use Drones in Filmmaking

A Carlsbad company -- Aerial MOB LLC -- is one of six aerial photo and video production companies that have been granted an exemption by the Federal Aviation Administration for the use of small unmanned aircraft systems for filmmaking in the United States.

Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx, speaking at a press conference on Tuesday, said in these cases the operation of UAS "does not pose a risk to national airspace users. It's a crucial step for the integration of UAS into our aviation system," and that companies seeking approval now have a model for doing so.

Currently, unmanned aircraft systems generally cannot be used for commercial purposes in the United States. While rules for the safe integration of SUAS into the national airspace are not expected until later this year, the exemption is allowed under Section 333 of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012.

This allowance does come with limitations, however as the aircraft must be operated by a three-man team, including a UAS operator with private pilot certification. All flying must be done within line-of-sight and can't be operated at night. The operator must also submit a detailed plan of operations three days before any filming takes place with an inspection of aircraft before flights.

Early this summer, seven film companies filed highly similar petitions with the FAA to fly small unmanned aircraft systems less than 55 pounds to a height of no more than 400 feet on a closed set.

Besides Aerial MOB LLC, the companies that filed petitions were Flying-Cam, HeliVideo Productions LLC, Pictorvision Inc., RC Pro Productions Consulting LLC, Astraeus Aerial and Snaproll Media LLC. The only company not to receive an exemption was Flying-Cam, which is working with the FAA to provide additional required information.



This image provided by Aerial MOB LLC shows its eight-rotor Sky Jib Helicopter in San Diego. The FAA announced it is granting permits to six firms, including Aerial MOB, to fly drones in filmmaking.

Celadon Wins Builders Choice Grand Award

Celadon, a 250-unit apartment high-rise under construction at Ninth Avenue and Broadway in Downtown San Diego, received the 2014 Builder's Choice Grand Award by BUILDER Magazine. The development will offer affordable housing to seniors and post-foster young adults.

Developed by BRIDGE Housing with architecture by SVA Architects in collaboration with Studio E, Celadon at 9th and Broadway will be available for households with incomes ranging from 30 percent to 60 percent of the area median income, with monthly rents varying from \$408 to \$879.

The project also features on-site shared amenities for an intergenerational resident population, including a kitchen, media room, a laundry room, a supportive services office, a seminar room with kitchen, and outdoor space that includes barbecues and a resident garden.

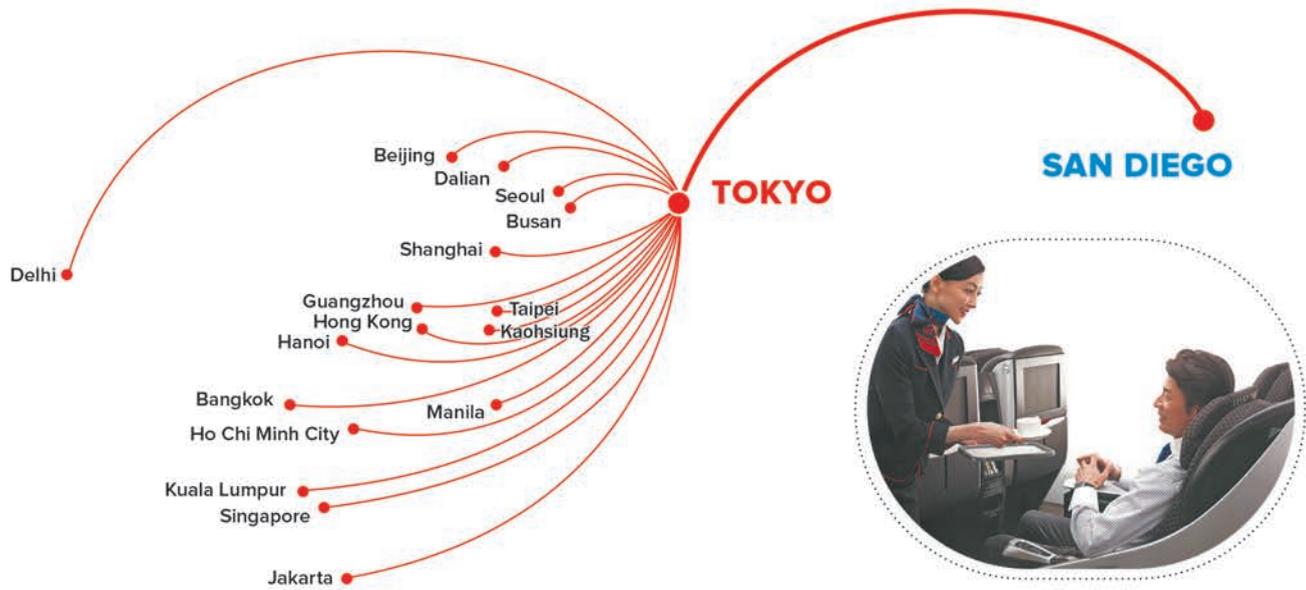
Celadon will welcome residents in February 2015.

Rendering of Celadon, slated for Ninth Avenue and Broadway in Downtown San Diego.



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New Senior Retirement Community Taking Shape in Chula Vista

St. Paul's Senior Homes & Services is building a new senior community in Otay Ranch in Chula Vista, a complex of 60 apartments and 94 assisted and independent living accommodations. The four and a half acre retirement community that started grading in January 2014 is scheduled to open in June 2015 under the name St. Paul's Plaza.

Community leaders, elected officials, the construction team and St. Paul's executives will attend a topping off party on Wednesday at the site, 1420 East Palomar St. in Chula Vista.

The complex will offer an indoor therapy pool, beauty parlor, chapel, pub, and extensive community areas including a 150 person multi-purpose/event room and family style gathering areas with barbeque facilities and a children's play ground.



Rendering of St. Paul's Plaza.

California Tower at Museum of Man To Reopen to Public After 80-Year Closure

Closed for 80 years, the California Tower at the Museum of Man in Balboa Park will reopen to the public on Jan. 1, museum officials announced Tuesday.

"This is transformational not just for the Museum of Man, but also for all of Balboa Park," said museum CEO Micah Parzen. "This will be the one experience all visitors, tourists and residents alike remember forever."

The 150-foot tower, which offers sweeping views of San Diego and can, in turn, be seen from many points in the city, was closed after the second Panama-California Exposition in 1935.

The museum's Grant Barrett told City News Service that there are no records that adequately explain why the tower was sealed off. The structure has undergone a seismic retrofit and, while it might need another retrofit in 2016, it appears to be in pretty good condition.

The tower is 100 years old and, like many of the original structures in the park, was built for the first Panama-California Exposition in 1915. The reopening is expected to be a major attraction for the celebration of the park's centennial next year.

The museum also announced a campaign to raise \$3 million to pay for remodeling of the tower, safety improvements, a long-term tower fund and for investments in other parts of the institution.

— City News Service



California Tower

SD METRO Freelancer Wins Press Club Awards

Freelance writer Delle Willett won a first place award and a second place award in the San Diego Press Club's 2014 Excellence in Journalism awards for articles she wrote that appeared in SD METRO Magazine this past year.

Willett won the first place award in the Magazines: Business and Financial category for her article, "Mind the Gap," which described the pay gap between women and men, why it is happening, who it affects and how it affects them, and how society would benefit if the gap were closed. It offers suggestions on how an individual can mind the gap in concrete and effective ways.

Her second place award — in the category of Magazines: Arts and Entertainment Reporting — was for "Gender Diversity Missing

in Film: SDSU professor documents lack of women directors." The article describes the work done by the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film at SDSU, founded in 2007 by professor Martha Lauzen. Using data from the center's research, the article looks at gender inequities in the big-budget film world, the shortage of opportunities for women to direct large-budget studio features, theories on labor-market inequities, lack of leadership by film studio heads and union executives, and several women who have broken through the celluloid ceiling.

Last year, Willett won a second place San Diego Press Club award for an article published in both the North Park News and SD Metro — "North Park's Funky Newsstand



Delle Willett

NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN FOR MOST ADMIRER COMPANIES

SD METRO is soliciting nominations for 2014's Most Admired Companies in San Diego County. Send us your nomination of a company you believe demonstrates the highest level of honesty, integrity, business practices and service to its industry and community. Nominations may be emailed to Rebeca Page at rebecapage@sandiegometro.com or Bob Page at bobpage@sandiegometro.com. The deadline is November 28th.

Our Most Admired Companies report will be published in December.

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The Little College Doing Big Things

You may have driven past Platt College many times and never even noticed it. A short walk from the San Diego State campus, the small media arts college blends into the community unobtrusively. But make no mistake, the 300-student college may be small, but it's having a big impact on the community — from the graduates who contribute to the California economy to the current students who are actively engaged in community service.

Platt San Diego School of Media Art has been in San Diego for more than 30 years, and was actually the first multimedia program in the city, says Meg Leiker, president of the college. “We chose to remain small because it allows us to give each student a truly personal experience and to fulfill our mission of providing a rigorous academic curriculum while ensuring our graduates are highly employable web designers, graphic artists, and multimedia designers,” says Leiker.

About 70 percent of Platt College graduates stay in San Diego County and put their skills to work in the entertainment industry, graphic design, web development and more. Graduates have worked at local TV stations and magazines as well as in corporate settings. “This contributes to the economy, but also improves the quality of life in our community,” says Leiker.

Some graduates move to Hollywood, like Jason Giles, who became a technical animator with Sony Pictures after earning his degree at Platt College. Jose Cabral was able to put his multimedia design skills to work at the Microsoft Surface product launch event, and on the Lady Gaga “Born This Way” tour. And recent graduate Daren Horwege has worked as a production assistant on several music videos at Walt Disney Studios.

“We are very proud of how our web classes offer such excellent training in usability,” says Dean of Education, Marketa Hancova. “Employers are looking for students who are not only excellent designers who understand code, but who also have a grasp of usability concepts, which is an analysis of the users of websites, their habits, and their psychology.”

When the workforce is highly skilled, the economic benefit to the community is clear. Platt College takes their commitment to San Diego a step further, though, and encourages students to do community service. The school provides opportunities to participate in beach clean up, blood drives, and many fundraisers. Students also provide free workshops through public libraries and summer camps.

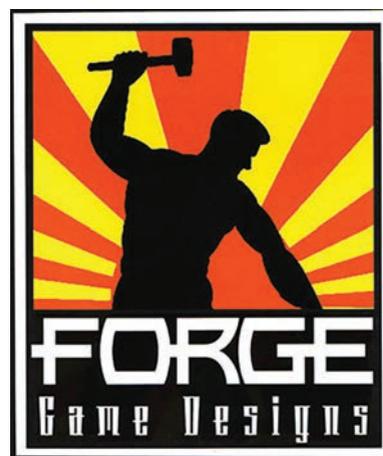
“Being a student goes beyond learning skills in the classroom,” says Hancova. “It’s also about engaging with the world in which we live.” To that end, Platt College also attends performances of opera, music, and theatre. Recently, the school brought several members of the San Diego Symphony to campus in its courtyard celebration of Constitution Day. “We feel very passionate about educating our students in a way so they become well-informed citizens who embrace art and culture,” says Hancova.



Banner by Vincent Brown.



By Ariana Kennedy



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BING CROSBY SEASON

From Homeless



Montañó's mission is simple: Give people a way to create more free time by giving them a way to build wealth without slaving away at a desk.

to Homebuilder

By Jennifer Coburn

Richard Montañó rises from the street to a lofty perch in the real estate industry

If Richard Montañó's life were being made into a movie, the opening scene would be his mother knocking her 9-year-old son to the ground, then bolting in the opposite direction to catch up with her drug dealer.

Homeless and addicted to crack cocaine, Montañó's mother often went missing. This time it was for several days. When the boy finally found his mother, he interrupted a drug deal by grabbing her purse and emptying the contents onto the sidewalk.

That's when she struck him. "I just wanted to go to the park, I just wanted to be with my mom," Montañó says. "She wasn't physically abusive, but her addiction took her to a desperate place that day."

When they saw the altercation, several adults came to Montañó's aid. One of them asked what the boy was going to do. The man was most likely inquiring about the boy's immediate plans, but Montañó started thinking long term. "I looked around and realized none of these guys knew what to do, so if I wanted something different, it was up to me to figure it out," he says.

While his peers were safely tucked away in their fourth grade classrooms, Montañó walked to Father Joe's homeless shelter, where

he had spent many nights, and called his aunt and uncle. It was then that his life took a dramatic turn for the better.

His aunt enrolled him in school and he watched the family build economic security through real estate investment. "My uncle used to say that there is no more real investment than real estate," Montañó, now a 34-year-old homebuilder, recalls.

Today, Montañó owns and operates Montañó Companies, three real estate investment groups that allow people to generate passive income by owning property. His mission is simple: Give people a way to create more free time by giving them a way to build wealth without slaving away at a desk.

"A lot of people want this, but lack traditional investor attributes like time, money, and expertise in real estate investment," explains Montañó. "So we created a system to put everyone together" so they can invest collaboratively.

Montañó's original company, FIT Properties, is a boutique brokerage that has been buying and selling investment properties in San Diego since 2007. The company serves as a consultant to builders and provides property management as well.



Montaño's company is building 32 row homes in Golden Hill.

Two years later, Montaño launched LIV Capital Group which brings together private investors for real estate projects. The homebuilder says he believes people should have entrée into real estate investing at any income level, so his company offers public and private investment opportunities ranging from \$10,000 to \$100 million.

Montaño's third company is close to his heart for several reasons. Sofia Living, a group of three projects, currently under construction in San Diego County, is named after his daughter, the eldest of his three young children. Montaño says he named both his daughter and his company Sofia because the name is a derivation of the Greek word meaning "wisdom."

"Sofia Living is inspired living with a purpose, which is green, sustainable living," explains Montaño. All three projects, which include a nine-unit complex in Bankers Hill, 32 row homes in Golden Hill, and 14 townhomes in Carlsbad, include solar power and other amenities designed to reduce the carbon footprint of residents.

Montaño Companies currently employs

seven people and estimates its gross revenue for 2014 to be \$50 million. It expects to double that in 2015.

The once-homeless real estate mogul has a very different family life than he did in his early years. Happily married with three young children, he's passionate about making sure he has time to spend time with his family, characterizing them as "what is most important in life."

This doesn't mean Montaño has forgotten his roots, though. He is a partner in the Voiceless Project, a nonprofit organization that aims to raise awareness about children in the foster care system in America by producing a feature film.

Montaño is working with Mindy Fletcher, foster care advocate and wife of former California State Assembly Member Nathan Fletcher, to educate the public about how foster children impact the community. "Eighty percent of people in the prison system were once in the foster care system," says Montaño. "Within 18 months of leaving the foster care system, 66 percent are dead, homeless, or on drugs."

Of the Voiceless Project film, Montaño says, "We have an opportunity to have an impact, to educate people, inspire them, and show them ways they can help make a change."

There are many people who would have been embittered by their early experiences living on the street. Montaño talks about his life without judgment for his mother, and without regret for a childhood lost. In fact, he says, sleeping on the streets was kind of fun at the time. "We were all lined up with our sleeping bags on the sidewalk," he says with a laugh, as if describing a slumber party, though he says he now he understands the seriousness of the situation.

Perhaps it is this outlook that leads him to success in business. Maybe it was his uncle's good advice, or a sincere desire to provide a different life for his own children.

Richard Montaño may have started his life being knocked down. But he got up, got smart, and is now writing his own happy ending.



Rendering of the nine-unit Bankers Hill complex that is part of the Sofia Living group formed by Richard Montaño.

30 Years and Counting

By April Harter-Enriquez

How San Diego's Pacific Building Group Reached Its Pearl Anniversary



Jim Roherty, president, and Greg Rogers, CEO, of Pacific Building Group.

Thirty years in business is no small feat. It requires constant innovation, weathering economic downturns and building a company culture that inspires and attracts a passionate team. For San Diego-based general contracting firm Pacific Building Group, the journey started out of the back of a pickup truck.

This year, the local firm is celebrating its 30th anniversary, having learned several lessons along the way.

“It’s been an incredible journey to get to this point, and our team of remarkably passionate and service-driven employees, from senior project superintendents to recent graduates, has enabled us to consistently deliver high-quality construction services to reach this milestone,” said Greg Rogers, the firm’s CEO.

A graduate of San Diego’s Hoover High School, Rogers founded Pacific Building Group, which has evolved from offering drywall and tenant improvement services to a variety of construction services, such as preconstruction, design-build, tenant im-

provements, facilities maintenance and more.

Today, Rogers and the Pacific Building Group team, including President Jim Roherty, are proud to make up one of San Diego’s largest general contracting firms, with 2013 revenue in the \$70 million range. The company has employed more than 1,100 workers in the last 10 years alone.

Recent projects like helipad updates for UCSD Hillcrest Trauma Center, an exterior renovation for an iconic California Western School of Law building and projects for other vital San Diego institutions like Scripps, Sony, Sharp Healthcare and more keep the firm at the forefront of San Diego’s building activity.

What’s the formula for success?

“Success comes down to three things for us,” said Rogers. “It’s safety; professional and seamless management; and a team willing to pour their hearts into each and every project.”

cont. pg. 16

In early 2015 Donovan's will offer you an oceanfront view



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Safety: Exceeding a Client's Expectations

The firm maintains a rigorous safety training program for all employees and holds its subcontractors to similarly high standards. Elements of the safety training program include: OSHA 30-hour Occupational Safety and Health Training; CPR and first aid training; NUCA Evacuation Safety and Competent Person Training Program; Fall Protection Competent Person Training; and Advanced SWPPP (Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan) Training.

This commitment to safety has earned the firm recognition from both Cal OSHA and Associated Subcontractors Alliance (ASA) San Diego.

While most construction firms awarded Cal OSHA's Golden Gate Partnership Recognition wait years to make the grade, Pacific Building Group earned the honor after the agency's first consultation visit this year. The Cal OSHA Consultation Service saw fit to recognize Pacific Building Group in August for its "effort in implementing and maintaining an effective Injury and Illness Prevention Program."

Similarly, Associated Subcontractors Alliance (ASA) San Diego awarded Pacific Building Group top 2014 honors in the categories of General Contractor of the Year and Best Safety Record. This marks the fourth ASA General Contractor of the Year win for Pacific Building Group in six years.

"As we celebrate our 30th anniversary,

these honors remind us that our constant attention to safety and training has been and continues to be an integral component to earning our clients' trust and toward sustaining our long-term success," said Roherty.

Diversification of Services

Beyond maintaining a safe work environment, the company strives to professionally and seamlessly manage all projects. While the firm offers a broad range of services, its focus on preconstruction services has helped buoy the firm during recessions and corrections.

Preconstruction is when the firm participates in open communication through schematic and design development, and enlists trusted subcontractors for specific cost, constructability and lead-time efficiencies.

"Preconstruction enables us to assist the client and design team from day one, maximizing the value of their dollars and minimizing any potential disruptions during construction," said Roherty. "Because of these benefits, it's been a way for us to keep building during economic downturns, too."

Recent preconstruction projects completed by Pacific Building Group include ViaSat Cafe, Inova Diagnostics, and Cymer, all located in San Diego.

To continue growing its business while addressing clients' budgets and construction management needs, the firm has also focused on tenant improvements that transform a commercial space without

forcing a company to relocate or build from the ground-up; as well as design-build, which is when architectural design and construction services are performed under one contract.

"Our preconstruction, design-build and tenant improvement services help keep companies on budget and lead to successful, problem-solving projects," said Roherty. "By professionally and seamlessly managing such projects, we've created trust with clients which leads to repeat business."

What About the People?

The last piece to the puzzle, Rogers says, is the people.

"Our employees and strategic partners are not only good at what they do, they're constantly looking to learn, grow and innovate so that we can deliver top projects for our clients," added Rogers. "Each project is something to be proud of."

Two such employees are Pacific Building Group project managers Brandon Stevens and Ryan Childs, who have just earned Design-Build Institute of America's (DBIA) Designated Design-Build Professional certification. Their DBIA courses focused on team-centered approaches to design and construction, including project delivery skills.

"This improves the company's expertise and capacity," said Roherty. "It's also an example of the dedication and meaningful work our employees put forth."



Pacific Building Group is celebrating 30 years of construction services, including a renovation for Scripps Green Hospital's Bi-plane Angiography Suite in La Jolla.



Pacific Building Group's portfolio includes extensive tenant improvements for Northrup Grumman's Unmanned Systems Center of Excellence in Rancho Bernardo.

NEW CAR REVIEW: The 2015 Hyundai Genesis By Eric Peters

Here's some inside baseball. Two of the best luxury sedans on the market are technically not luxury sedans.

Well, they're not branded or priced as such.

I speak — out of school — of the Chrysler 300 and the Hyundai Genesis, just updated for the new model year.

But you'd be a fool not to consider them as such, and to compare them with the "branded" stuff.

Both these rear-wheel-drive rollers start under \$40k — several thousand dollars below the entry price point of pretty much every name-branded mid-sized luxury sedan currently on the market — yet ride, limo-like, on longer wheelbases than several full-size luxury sedans with base prices \$15-\$20k higher.

They also come standard with strong V-6s and can be equipped with even stronger V-8s for about the same money the "luxury" branded cars want for their fours and sixxes.

Several of the \$45k-and-up competition will also charge you extra for amenities such as heated leather seats, satellite radio and a bunch of other stuff that comes standard in the Genesis (and the 300). It sounds to good to be true, but for once, it's not.

What It Is

The Genesis is Hyundai's second-largest sedan, not quite as big as the dreadnought Equus sedan, but noticeably bigger (and more opulently equipped as it sits) than a Caddy CTS, BMW 5 or Mercedes E — and only slightly smaller (outside) than a Lexus LS460, but very comparably equipped, and just as roomy inside, for a lot less money.

Base price is \$38,000 for the RWD version equipped with a 311 hp, 3.8 liter V-6 engine. The same car with all-wheel-drive lists for \$40,500.

A top-of-the-line Genesis V-8 starts at \$51,500. The same money will buy you a base trim BMW 5 (\$49,750), Benz E-Class (\$51,900) and about 80 percent of a top-of-the-line Lexus LS460.

Chrysler's 300 is the only other car of this genre that doesn't come off as a rip-off in comparison. Its base price of \$30,895 is even less than the base price of a new Genesis (a lot less) and even "with everything" — including the powerful Hemi V-8, all-wheel-drive and the ultra-lux John Varvatos package, it's hard to spend more than about \$50k on one.

What's New

The 2015 Genesis gets a new body and interior and rides on a longer and plusher 118.5 inch wheelbase. All-wheel-drive is also available for the first time, addressing one of the previous-generation Genesis' few empty-handed issues relative to the other cars in this class (as well as the Chrysler 300).

What's Good

Stately, classy, quiet, comfortable, roomy and powerful. Opulent, but not overwhelming, interior. Under \$40k-to-start MSRP ought to embarrass the luxury-branded competition.

What's Not So Good

Chrysler 300 is also quiet, comfortable, roomy (roomier, in fact) powerful, and even less expensive. Hyundai hasn't got the cachet that Lexus (or BMW or Mercedes Benz) has got. Yet.

Under The Hood

The Genesis comes standard with something that's increasingly optional in this class, a big (3.8 liter) V-6 engine. For instance, the

price somewhat-comparable Cadillac CTS and BMW 5 come equipped in standard trim with tiny (2.0 liter) turbo fours, neither of which approach the Hyundai's muscular 311 hp rating. The BMW 528i's 2.0 engine delivers 241 hp; the Caddy's 272 hp. In both case, you can upgrade, up to 420 hp in the CTS, if you choose the V-Sport version, which comes with a turbocharged 3.6 liter V-6 ... and to a 4.4 liter, 443 hp V-8 in the BMW 5. But the V-Sport CTS has a base price of \$69,070. The V-8 BMW 550i is a bit more accessible at \$63,900 to start. Both are \$20k-plus more than the V-6 Genesis.

You can see where this is headed.

If 311 hp isn't enough to crisp your bacon, move up to the Genesis V-8. Output climbs to an incredible 429 hp (and 383 ft.-lbs. of torque), which is untouchable for the money, and then some. Indeed, the V-8 Genesis only costs slightly more than the base-engined/four-cylinder 5-Series and Cadillac CTS sedans - and \$400 less than a V-6 Benz E-Class.

From another angle: You could spend \$51,500 to buy a 429 hp V-8 Genesis.

Or you could spend \$72,100 to get a 386 hp Lexus LS460.

Performance with either Genesis engine is excellent. The V-6/RWD version is capable of doing the 0-60 run in 6.4 seconds; armed with the V-8, the time drops to just over 5 seconds flat.

This, by the way, is speedier in both cases than the Chrysler 300, which comes standard with a 292 hp 3.6 liter V-6 (upgradable to 300 hp in S trims) with a 363 hp 5.7 liter Hemi V-8 available optionally. The V-6 300 gets to 60 in about 7 seconds flat while the Hemi-equipped model takes 5.5-5.8 seconds.



On The Road

The Genesis is an exceptionally plush, smooth and quiet-riding car. You know—the way big American sedans used to be. Only now there’s just one American sedan (the 300) that behaves this way. And the Koreans are closing fast.

If you’re over 40 today, you will remember when most cars were rear-wheel-drive rather than front-wheel-drive; when big V-8s were as common as small fours are today and, most of all, when ordinary people could afford to drive a big RWD car with a big V-8 engine under the hood. Today, only the 300 and Genesis offer that experience ... unless you're prepared to spend a lot more than \$50k.

The big Hyundai loves the open road and swallows the miles with S-Class aplomb, for C-Class money. Just to see what would happen, I took my Genesis test car for a drive up a truly vicious washed out gravel fire road out here in The Woods, where the reverbs are so severe they once literally caused a spot weld on the right rear shock absorber in my pick-up truck to shear off, leaving it dangling from its perch. But the barely-qualifies-as-fit-for-a-truck “road” did not perturb the Genesis. That is, it didn't perturb me, inside the Genesis.

At The Curb

The Genesis is a big and handsome car. Even bigger now. Its length (196.5 inches) and wheelbase (118.5 inches, an increase of about 3 inches over last year) puts it solidly in the full-size category. Yet it’s priced in the mid-sized category. Priced lower than its smaller mid-sized rivals, actually.

A Benz E-Class, for instance, is only 192.1 inches long and rides on a picayune-in-comparison 113.2 inch wheelbase. The BMW 5 is

also kleiner: 193.2 inches overall, with a 116.9 inch wheelbase. Even the Lexus LS460 — which is considered full-size, rides on a shorter (116.9 inch) wheelbase and has only slightly more backseat legroom (35.8 inches vs. 35 for the Genesis) and less legroom up front (43.7 inches vs. a regal 45.7 inches in the Hyundai).

There isn't another luxury sedan in this class that can touch the Hyundai's size-for-the-dollar. Well, there isn't another luxury branded sedan in this class that can. Which leaves the Chrysler 300. It's even larger, 198.6 inches end to end, and rides on the longest wheelbase of all, a stupendous 120.2 inches. Hence its 40.1 inches of second row legroom - untouchable by anything short of a Lexus L460 L (extended wheelbase) or a Mercedes S-Class. And those, of course, are six-figure cars.

The Genesis comes with real leather seats (heated leather seats) eighteen-inch wheels (17s are standard with the E-Class and BMW 5, neither of which come standard with either leather seats or seat heaters; they're extra cost) a seven speaker audio system with satellite radio included (extra, again, in the aforesaid luxury cars) and long list of additional features, all inclusive.

The Chrysler 300 is comparably well-padded, with 19-inch wheels standard, as well as leather and seat heaters and satellite radio, too.

My test car —with the Signature package (\$4,000)and the Tech package (\$3,500) and the Ultimate package (\$3,500) on top of that (includes power trunk closer, a 17 speaker Lexicon audi system, color HUD display, carbon dioxide sensor for the climate control and a bunch of other stuff, too) came to \$49,950.

That's \$12k and change less than a Lexus LS460 — and about \$200 more than you'd pay to get a base-trim BMW 528i with a 2.0 four

cylinder engine (241 hp vs. the Hyundai's 311) and no seat heaters, satellite radio or leather for you.

The Rest

The Genesis offers a few unusual features, among them a push-button “park” feature that lets you take your foot off the gas ± as at a red light — without having to move the gearshift lever to “park.” And speaking of gear shifters . . . the Genesis has a conventional (and center console mounted) lever, rather than a toggle or some other needlessly elaborate electronic interface. Of a piece, the rotary knob selector for the various secondary systems (audio/GPS, etc.) There is a lot of stuff to operate — but none of it is challenging to operate. Hyundai has followed the dictum of the great stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius: Simplify. This makes the Genesis an absolute pleasure to be in, whether as driver or passenger.

The Bottom Line

Hyundai has made more inroads in every segment — economy cars, family crossovers and now luxury cars (in all but name) than Guderian's tanks made in European Russia during the summer of '41. But it's more than just that; more than merely dollars and cents.

Simply put, the Genesis is a great car, price notwithstanding. It reminds me a lot of the original Lexus LS, which delivered a ball peen hammer wake-up call to Mercedes and BMW.

History does repeat itself - and we've got a (heated, leather wrapped, four-way power unbarred) front row seat.

Eric Peters is the author of "Automotive Atrocities" and "Road Hogs" and a former editorial writer/columnist for The Washington Times

2015 Hyundai Genesis specifications:

- Base price:** \$38,900; as tested (w/Signature, Technology & Ultimate packages) \$49,950
- Engine:** 3.8 liter V-6, 311 hp
- Transmission:** eight speed automatic
- Length:** 196.5 inches
- Width:** 74.4 inches
- Wheelbase:** 118.5 inches
- Curb weight:** 4,295 lbs.
- Luggage capacity:** 15.3 cubic feet
- EPA fuel economy:** 16 city/25 highway (RWD)
- Where assembled:** Ulsan, South Korea



The Bali Hai

Serving Aloha Spirit to San Diego for 60 Years

By Katelyn O’Riordan

A staple on San Diego’s dining scene since 1954, the Bali Hai Restaurant, originally “The Hut,” is celebrating 60 years in operation this November. Opened by San Diego restaurateur Tom Ham, the restaurant was Shelter Island’s first “tiki temple,” and is one of the largest remaining original tiki temples in the United States.

Delighting guests with panoramic views and delicious menu items focused on Polynesian cuisine with Southern California flair, it’s easy to see why Bali Hai continues to be a local favorite. The restaurant embraces the spirit of aloha. When you arrive at the northern tip of Shelter Island and view the restaurant’s impressive structure, you feel as though you’ve stepped off a plane in the tropics, with Mr. Bali Hai, a large wood sculpture at the front entrance, welcoming you.

Family owned and operated for more than five decades, Ham’s daughter Susie Baumann and her husband Larry, and their sons Grant, Andy and Tommy, continue to carry out Ham’s vision and legacy.

“There weren’t very many restaurants in neighborhoods back 60 years ago. We were one

of a handful of the restaurants people went to back then,” said Larry Baumann, owner of Bali Hai. “Because there were so few, the Bali Hai was blessed to become woven in the fabric of people’s lives, and we are still woven. Families have allowed us to be a part of every special occasion, including weddings, graduations and anniversaries over the years.”

Bali Hai underwent an extensive renovation in 2010 by renowned architect Graham Downes, and now features an expansive outdoor dining patio that highlights the prime location on San Diego Bay. The structure, built from more than fifteen types of exotic woods, has been restored to its original sheen, and the interior features a historic collection of Polynesian artifacts, ranging from tiki figures and ocean charts to wood weapons and native pictures.

The contrast of the warm wood tones with the floor-to-ceiling windows, exposing the bright lights of downtown San Diego and the aqua tones of the bay, is magical. The honey onyx bar lights up the center of the dining room, beckoning diners for a taste of one of Bali Hai’s tropical cocktails. The space is inviting, and encourages a

relaxed meal where you take your time and enjoy, Hawaiian style. The restaurant is also one of the few “dock and dine” locations on San Diego Bay, allowing guests to arrive by boat, only adding to the air that you’re on vacation, watching fellow travelers arrive.

The menu features farm fresh ingredients with Hawaiian, Chinese and Japanese influences, with selections varying slightly depending on time of day. The lunch menu is filled with pupus, soups and salads, sandwiches and house specials, ranging in price from \$5 to \$19. Dinner showcases raw dishes, pupus, soups and salads, kai (fish) and aina (land) selections, ranging in price from \$5 to \$32. And the restaurant even has a Sunday champagne brunch—popular with boaters—priced at \$38 for adults and including free-flowing champagne and a selection of breakfast, lunch, fresh seafood and dessert options. Gluten free? Don’t worry, Bali Hai even has separate menus for gluten intolerant diners.

Constantly on the hunt for happy hour spots to indulge after work, I dined during Bali Hai’s pau hana hour, which in Hawaiian means finished with work, a time for relaxation and social-

The Bali Hai is celebrating 60 years of operation.



RESTAURANT REVIEW

izing. We all need an excuse for a little Polynesian paralysis, a term used by island dwellers, specifically in Hawaii, to describe that people will get where they need to go in good time. No rush. Slow down. You get the idea.

Happy hour is available Monday through Friday from 3 – 6 p.m. A number of Bali Hai's pupu items from the main menu are available during pau hana, allowing restaurant goers to taste a nice selection of different items. I sampled the tuna poke, served with avocado cream cheese, masago and wonton; the coconut shrimp, with papaya salad and ginger lime dipping sauce; crispy vegetable spring rolls with an apple mustard sauce, micro mint salad and yuzu

vinaigrette; and island beef skewers with pickled pineapple salad. The presentation of all of the menu items is thoughtful and beautiful. Each dish is filled with fresh, vibrant ingredients that burst with flavor. And of course, when dining at the Bali Hai, it's ritual to sip on one, and I place emphasis on the word one, of their signature Mai Tais. The bartenders aren't lying when they say it's strong. More than one is enough to knock you off your chair.

It's clear by the end of my meal how Bali Hai has managed to maintain a strong presence in San Diego over the years. The ambiance, combined with friendly staff and variety of delicious menu items creates a memorable dining experience

for guests that keeps them coming back.

"We have had to evolve with the industry over the years to stay competitive and to thrive and we have managed to do that," Baumann said. "We are still the Bali Hai and we are looking forward to serving our community for another 60 years."

So what are you waiting for? Indulge in delicious cuisine and thirst-quenching Mai Tais, gaze out at panoramic views of San Diego Bay and the downtown skyline and let the Polynesian paralysis set in.

The Bali Hai Restaurant is located on Shelter Island at 2230 Shelter Island Drive. www.balihairrestaurant.com



Firecracker Ribs.



Susie Baumann, Tom Ham's daughter, and her husband Larry.



Egg Rolls.



Ahi Tuna Poke



Executive Chef Dion Morales



Dining with a view



Thirst quenchers.

Idyllic Weekend in the Desert



The Willows evokes
imagined memories of
Clark Gable, Carole Lombard,
and Albert Einstein

By Bob Page

Today, the Willows, after years of a painstaking re-do and now known as The Willows Historic Palm Springs Inn, is an AAA Four Diamond property.

Never would I have imagined that I'd sleep in the same hotel room where Clark Gable honeymooned or an Academy award-winning screenplay was written or where Albert Einstein spent a few nights. But such was our good fortune.

As you would surely suspect, this was no ordinary hotel room. To call it a hotel room would be a grave injustice.

This was an escape to a mansion tucked against the very base of the rugged Mt. San Jacinto Mountain in Palm Springs.

The story of this 1925 home, left to die in its own bones in the late 1980s/early 1990s, is one of how two visionaries brought it back to life.

What began as a celebratory lunch turned

into an unexpected real estate investment and a lifetime labor of love.

Tracy Conrad and Paul Marut had just completed their medical residencies at USC in 1994 when they decided to celebrate with a weekend in Palm Springs.

Sitting across the street from Le Vallauris, where they had dined on classic French fare, was a for sale sign on a rundown mansion, known as The Willows and the former home of silent film star Marion Davies.

Davies may be best known for her 30-year affair with publisher William Randolph Hearst but she was very much a savvy real estate investor and brilliant businesswoman.

"The affair with Hearst overshadowed the multi-faceted woman that she truly was and

history has not always been kind to her legacy," Conrad said.

Today, the Willows, after years of a painstaking re-do, and now known as The Willows Historic Palm Springs Inn, is an AAA Four Diamond property, all thanks to the tireless work, energy and smart restoration skills of Conrad and Marut.

If you're like the two of them were then and looking for an idyllic weekend in the desert, make your first call to The Willows.

The Willows functions somewhat as a B & B but its sophisticated charm is so much more than that.

The Willows was built as a luxurious private home in 1925 and remained so until Conrad and Marut opened its doors to their first

TRAVEL

guests in 1996.

There are only eight rooms but each has its own unique history.

We stayed in The Library Suite. What fun to think that we were staying in the very rooms where Clark Gable had honeymooned with Carole Lombard, where Hollywood director Paul Thomas Anderson spent four months writing his screenplay for "There Will Be Blood" and where a decade or two earlier Dr. Albert Einstein and Upton Sinclair had also popped in for a few days of desert relaxation.

The eight suites all share the same amenities in this classic and romantic Mediterranean villa. Each room has its own distinct style, charm and design with fireplaces, tandem claw tubs, private balconies and separate entrances, plush linens and king or queen size beds.

There is a heated swimming pool and Jacuzzi, free gated parking, 24-hour security, a delicious full three-course gourmet breakfast served overlooking a stunning 50-foot waterfall and evening wine and hors d'oeuvres.

And one of its best features, among the many, is its free Wi-Fi throughout.

The folks at Le Vallauris will walk over lunch to your room or bring it to you poolside. That's part of the marvelous experience to be enjoyed during your Willows stay. The distance between Le Vallauris and The Willows is about 75 steps.

Luminaries galore have called The Willows their desert retreat. Actresses Cameron Diaz, Suzanne Somers and Diane Keaton, Arianna Huffington, and former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush are among the many who have pillowed down at The Willows.

You can reserve all eight rooms for a special occasion. Conrad said, "The Inn lends itself well to small gatherings, and the guests seem to really enjoy not having to share the common areas with anyone other than themselves."

Guests can reserve the Inn in its entirety for \$3,400 per night for up to 16 guests. Or, if you want to leave the entourage behind, you can escape to The Willows for four days and receive the fifth night free.

The Willows is perfectly situated for the enjoyment of all that Palm Springs offers. It is only a block from Palm Canyon Drive, the heartbeat of downtown Palm Springs.

So close, yet a world away, says Conrad.

"Palm Springs offers an eclectic of hotels, shops and restaurants. It is unique and has the only downtown in the Coachella Valley. It draws a different crowd than the large resorts down valley. People that appreciate Palm Springs like the quiriness, originality, art and culture. It isn't just about the sun and golf," Conrad added.

The Willows draws guests from throughout the United States as well as from England, Germany, Australia, Japan and Latin America.

The Willows will celebrate its 90th birthday next year, yet the mansion remains a timeless retreat for travelers seeking a respite totally out of the ordinary.

Not sitting still and staring at another incredible real estate investment opportunity, Conrad and Marut bought The Thomas O'Donnell House in 2000, also built in 1925, and located above the hill from The Willows.

The O'Donnell House offers breathtaking views of Palm Springs. It is perfect for corpo-

rate retreats, fundraising galas and special events. The 4,100-square-foot O'Donnell House can accommodate up to 125 guests for weddings, receptions and events. It has four bedrooms and four baths.

The Willows books early in season so the word is to jump on the phone or email and make your reservations now. Don't miss The Willows. There is nothing like it elsewhere in the Coachella Valley. Or maybe in all of Southern California.

FACT SHEET

The Willows Historic Palm Springs Inn
412 West Tahquitz Canyon Way
Palm Springs, CA., 92262

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