

THE ISLAND BRIDGE



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SO NICE WE DID IT TI-IRICE: MUSEUM TOPS LIST OF SOCAL FAVES

Denim and Diamonds Fest, Vets BBQs, Sold-Out Speaker Events and Iconic Exhibits highlight Banner Year.

By PETE WEITZNER, Producer, "Golden Age of Newport Harbor"

The Balboa Island Museum Newport Beach staged its busiest year in 2023, so many events at the Museum and in the community. We start our review with a familiar feting.

For the third year in a row LA Times readers tabbed Balboa's museum as a "2023 Best of the Southland" - #1 in Orange County - among some 40 museums - and a finalist in the Family Friendly Attraction category for all the Southland. "Truly an honor, grateful to our community, all who travel to visit," President Emeritus and Founder Shirley Pepys said. And they did come, the visitor rally topped 300,000 in 2023 to the 210 Marine Avenue location, where the museum set up shop November 2018.



That marked a steady 20-year ascent, from what Founder Pepys called a "one-room storage closet" above Island Market to a kitschy cottage at the entrance to Marine Avenue to the 2,200-sf building that also is bursting at the seams. Museum leaders want 210 Marine and more to become its permanent home. On the night of its signature event, The Denim and Diamonds Western-themed party at Balboa Fun Zone, it launched its building campaign. "Perfect night of dancing, dining and donating," Immediate Museum Past-President Paula Castanon said. "It was the perfect kickoff event for the BIMNB building fund for a permanent home to carry on the tradition and history of Orange County." BIMNB capped 2023 with Denim and Diamonds and that 3rd Annual Fun Zone Festival. The amusement-park/country-themed evening was the nonprofit's biggest fundraiser, and sponsors were a who's who of Museum and Island benefactors. More than 250 attended, helping to raise more than \$100,000. The evening was filled with food, games, and music from local country fave James Kelly Band. "Such a fun, magical evening, Museum Executive Director Tiffany Pepys Hoey said, thrilled to pull it off again." Linda Young and her company, Newport-based Elite OC Productions staged the memorable evening - a perfect caper to a busy and memorable year.



Museum supporters dusted off their boots and cowboy hats for the 3rd Annual Fun Zone Festival • Denim & Diamonds. Next year's October 18th, Save the Date!

Other 2023 highlights:

> The museum hosted Sunday night dinners, and several guest speakers and panels to standing-room-only crowds. There was a 75 Years of Balboa Bay Club panel, along with prolific authors **David Koenig** ("Mouse Tales," "Shooting Columbo"). **Jim Byron**, 29-year-old wunderkind and CEO of the Richard Nixon Foundation brought his civics-in-the-classroom crusade to Balboa Island's museum. "We're losing a sense of shared national identity, what President Reagan called the last best hope for humanity," Byron said.

> 2023's private cruise of Newport Harbor exclusively for Museum members was dubbed "Celebrate Quarro de Mayo." The fundraiser feamred a mariachi band and catering by Owner **Ron Salisbury** and his 100-year-old El Cholo Restaurant (locally in Corona del Mar). The Ferry treat also served as a "Save the Ferry" rallying cry, as the 100+-year-old Balboa Island Ferry faces an existenrial threat from a 2026 zero-emissions mandate by the California Air Resources Board.

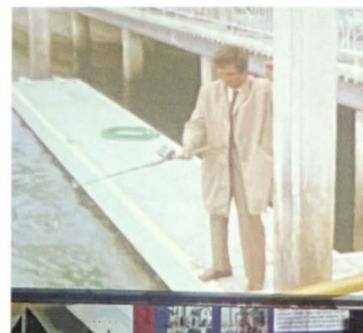
> Executive Director and Museum Curator **Tiffany Pepys Hoey** kept coming up with iconic and crowd-pleasing new exhibits throughout 2023. "Celebrating 100 Years -**Theodore Robins Ford**," featured the venerable, family-run dealership who brought the first Ford score in Orange County to Balboa Peninsula in 1923. The spring exhibit in the upfront artists' gallery "had just a wonderful reception," Pepys Hoey said. Same could be said of the joinr anises' gallery feamring glass magician **Lynleigh Love** and Local Treasure **Dottie Siemon**, who merely devoted 20 years to painting every planter lining our boardwalks. Fall brought a feting of **Laura Scudder**, "The Potato Chip Queen of the West," and "a woman way ahead of her c'ime," Pepys Hoey said. When Scudder wasn't capmring 50% of the Golden State's chip marker, she was inventing wax-paper, sealed packaging, and piloting patriotic initiatives during WW II like Victory Gardens, donating her snack foods to che troops and in billboards and newspaper ads encouraging ochers to do their pare. 2023 ended with a salute to 75 years of Newport Lifeguards, including chelate **Ben Carson**.



The Big Event: Annual Fun Zone Event sported Western theme in '23. Festival returns October 18th in '24



Sold out events included celebrating 75 years of the good life at Balboa Bay Club and Peter Falk's Columbo episodes shot on Newport Harbor



Museum Past-Pres. Paula Castanon pins Sgt. Robert Harrison as Nephew Phillip Long looks on at '23 Memorial Day 880; Summer Bailey sings the National Anthem



Robins and Scudder: The new exhibits celebrating innovator and business pioneer Laura Scudder and 100 years of Theodore Robins Family Ford drew great praise



Saluting 75 Years of Newport Lifeguards included a tribute to the late Ben Carson



War hero and Parade fixture Cornell Ijiescu was one of many profiles added to Balboa Museum's Legacy Video library



The Cinco de Mayo private ferry cruise has become a museum staple for members

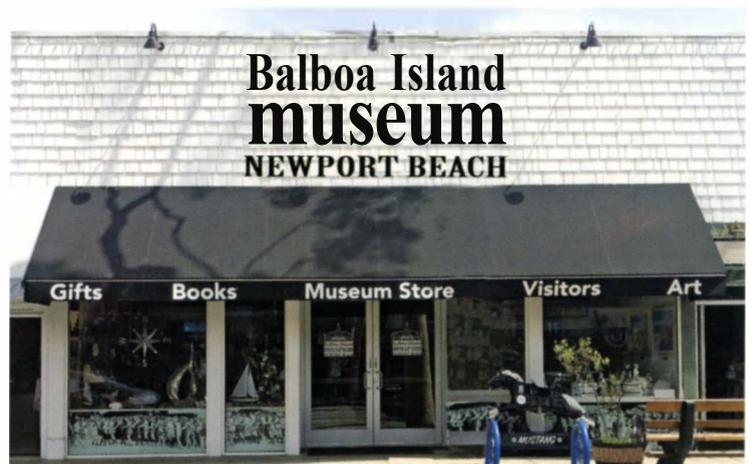
Pepys Hoey kicks off 2024 with a new exhibit on the transformation of the Irvine Ranch.

> The Memorial Day BBQ at Balboa Island Park was but one of several events and deeds the museum continues to sponsor on behalf of our Island veterans, believed to approach 300 past and present. Nearly 200 Island vets have shared their history at www.balboaislandmuseum.org/veterans/. "Best BBQ we've had, sure felt char way," Memorial Day BBQ Founder and WW II Veteran **BU Stewart** said. The BBQs pay homage to all those who served our country and is a dual effort, underwritten by the Balboa Island Museum Newport Beach, which also provides many volunteers, runs the raffle, etc. All the BBQ essentials, setup to breakdown? courtesy of Balboa Island Improvement Association. "It means so much to our Balboa Island community that we honor on Memorial Day all those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for the USA," Master of Ceremonies and All-Around BBQ-MVP **Dennis Bress** said. The Memorial and Veterans Day BBQs are back in 2024, along with a Vietnam Vets Pinning Ceremony March 29.

> The Museum grew its collection of some 50 Legacy Videos and Oral Histories, adding the stories of people like the **C.H. Reed** Family which brought ice to the island - selling 25 lb. blocks for a quarter - and the **Reverend Harry White**, the Methodist minister who started one of the first churches and had the merch and good fortune to buy a \$75 lot on Garner Avenue in 1907. All the Legacy Videos can be enjoyed on NBTY Channel 3 and at <https://www.balboaislandmuseum.org/oral-history/>

> Much more to come in 2024 and beyond - special events and education and curatorial of our shared history. Goldman Sachs Executive and Philanthropist John Connors came aboard as President. He and Pepys noted in their initial fundraising letter, "our fine reputation has been established, and now it is time we plan for the future. The museum plays an important role in the Newport Beach community. In order to ensure that we serve generations forward, we are officially launching (this campaign)." The museum chairman and president concluded the campaign letter with this promise: "The museum is free to the public and always will be!"

> Patrons can now become permanent members of the Museum with a donation of \$5K or more, along with having their names added to the donor wall block at the entrance.



Balboa Island Museum is located at 210 Marine Ave., Balboa Island
 Open daily • Free general admission • Become a member
 For more information, visit <https://balboaislandmuseum.org>