

THE ISLAND

# BRIDGE

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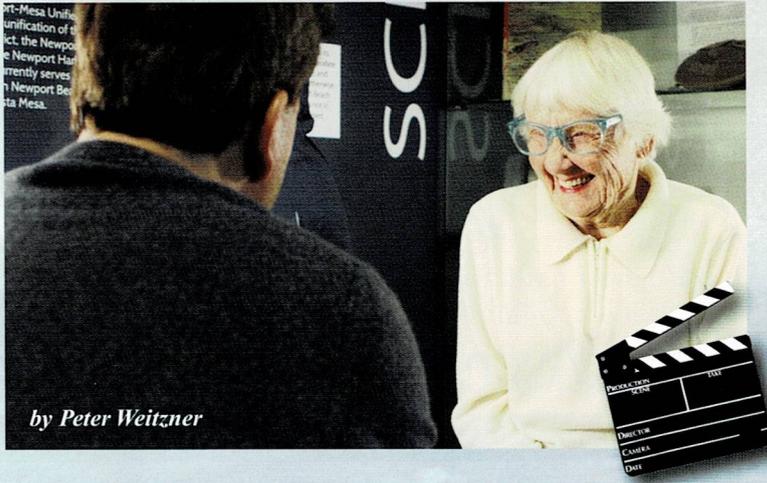
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**STAY STRONG ISLANDERS!**

# Museum Features Dottie

## She Painted Every Planter...and She's Still Painting



by Peter Weitzner

If you live on Balboa Island, or just visit a bit, you may know **Dottie Siemon**. You surely know some of her artwork – especially one project.

“Don’t even remember who asked me,” Siemon said. But Dottie decided one day to paint every clay, planter pot on Balboa Island. It would only take 20 years.

“Just took all my paints and loaded up my little wagon, Siemon recalled. I’d go to each pot, tip it up, put bricks under it and I’d sit on the sidewalk and I’d paint them. Because they were big clay pots.”



Still Doodling: Siemon's greeting cards and rocks are for sale at the Balboa Island Museum

Siemon went elaborate at first, but recognizing the task at hand, settled for reductionist – ocean and sailboats and a “Dottie S” signature. She was right for the job: inveterate painter, immensely talented and prolific.

Walking into Dottie Siemon’s Agate Avenue home is to walk into a scene in the film “Moulin Rouge.”

“My house is very colorful,” Siemon conceded.

Valley native Dottie used to vacation on both Balboa Island and Balboa Peninsula.

“I loved it. I just never dreamed that I’d get to live here.” The home Dottie has lived in for half of her life, her entire Newport life, was built in the 70s by her Van Nuys High-School classmate Dick Anderson.

Siemon and her husband Bob had Anderson build the home with a back house for Dottie’s mother. But the builder, no one, could have imagined what Dottie would do with the inside. “I paint everything. My husband used to say, ‘if you come in the house long enough, you’re gonna get painted.’” No one, and no furniture, is safe: the chairs, the cupboards, ceiling fans. She painted her dining room table red.

There’s paintings of every color and type: Islands scenes, abstracts, seascapes, murals.

They met in the 40s, Dottie and Bob – Valley residents who worked at the Shell Oil Co. They were married 62 years. Dottie had the arts gene.

So did Bob. His father drew for The Walt Disney Co.’s comic books. And the Siemon’s had four children: three of them girls, two of them twins, and all artists: a sculptor, a glass blower, a jewelry designer. And Dottie?

“I just putzed, doodled...always been crafty, always made things.” In her 60s she took some quasi-classes in acrylic painting from an artist on Lido Peninsula.



“More like a muse,” Siemon recalled. After that, good luck keeping her away from the paintbrush.

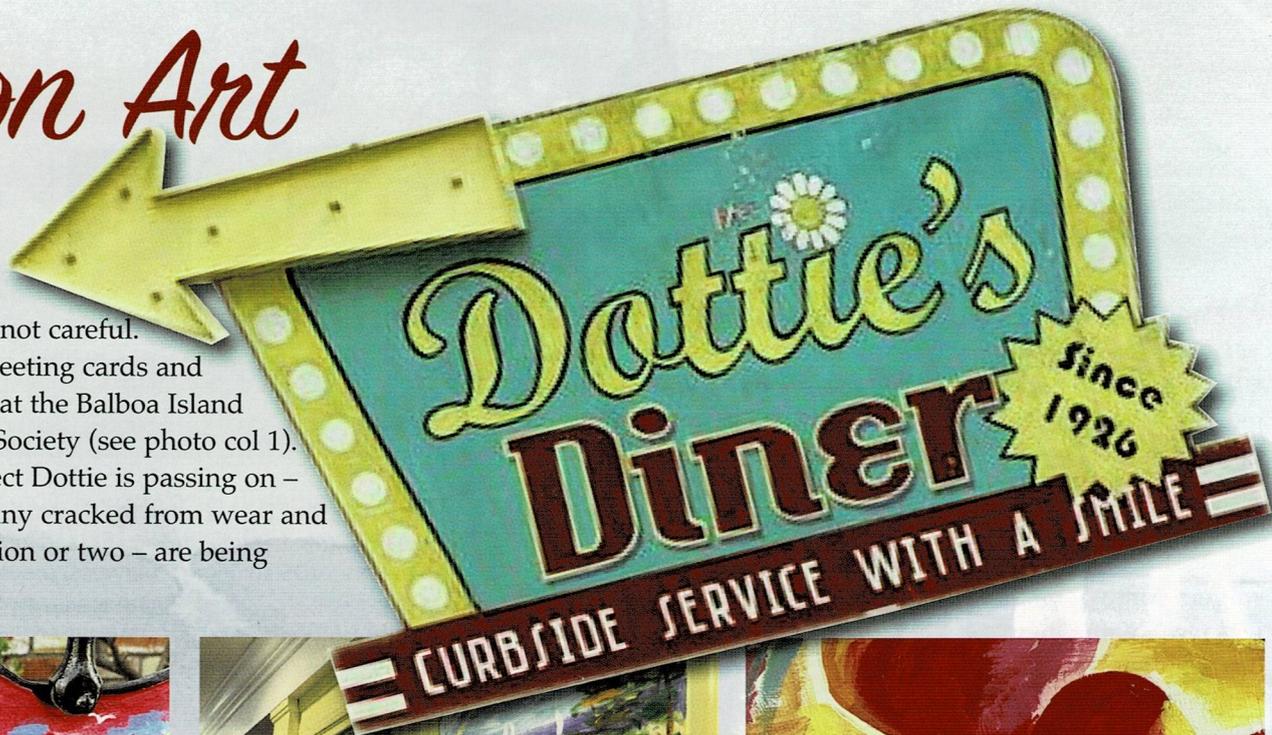
Bob died several years ago. Today Dottie, 93, shares the Agate Avenue home with her Shih Tzu, Angel, and with a lot of Island friends as regular pop-bys.

“Here, you’re never lonely. There’s always someone to say hello to.”

# Siemon Art

And she is still painting – everything and everyone—if you’re not careful. There’s Dottie Siemon greeting cards and decorative rocks for sale at the Balboa Island Museum and Historical Society (see photo col 1).

But there is one project Dottie is passing on – the clay, planter pots, many cracked from wear and tear and a golf cart collision or two – are being replaced by plastic pots.



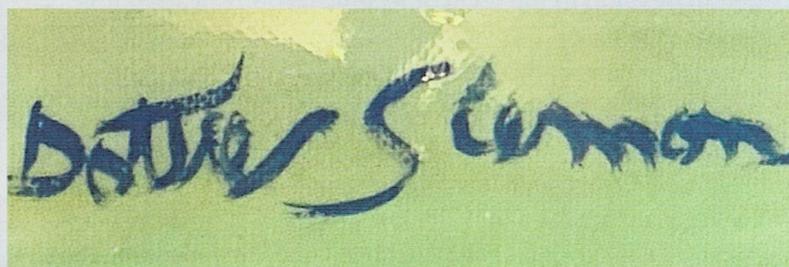
“Paint doesn’t hold up on the plastic. Fades out very quickly even though I varnish them. I figure after 20 years, someone else can take over,” Siemon said with a chuckle.

After all, Dottie gave the Island and its residents a sweet deal first time around. 20 years. Dottie Siemon artwork. Free.

You can purchase Dottie Siemon’s greeting cards and decorative rocks at The Balboa island Museum and Historical Society at 210 Marine Avenue. They’re right up front. You can also watch a “Legacy Video” on Dottie Siemon, “The Island’s Planter Painter,” on the Museum’s website:

<https://www.balboaislandmuseum.org/oral-history/>, or on the museum’s YouTube page:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3OQN2xTBGo>



Think you or a friend or Newport Peninsula neighbor is Legacy worthy? Please let us know, the next interviews will be conducted in May. Just email or tweet at **Pete Weitzner** at [weitzner@chapman.edu](mailto:weitzner@chapman.edu), @Weitzner or © 949-291-1316.