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DELIVERING NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS

Matt Thomas Moves Museum Crowd with Survival Story

Peninsula resident emerged from coma in 1991

BY PETE WEITZNER – BALBOA ISLAND RESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, "THE GOLDEN AGE OF NEWPORT HARBOR"



Pop and Pal: Jon and Richard memorably laughed their way through their life story together for the Museum's "Legacy Video."

If you know someone facing adversity, may be a good idea to suggest they seek out where Peninsula Resident Matt Thomas is speaking. The founder of **positive-matters.org** can inspire a comeback, starting with his own.

Thomas related his inspirational story at the Balboa Island Museum Newport Beach on a recent October evening, the story of a young man waking up from a coma of three months in June 1991, to become a man who today just keeps climbing new heights.

"I was told if in the first five years you don't recover, well...I'm 32 years into it, I'm still moving forward," Thomas told museum patrons. "I'm blessed to have the strength to do it."

Thomas' family tracks several generations to Newport Harbor, and his father was a Broadway performer with the likes of Harry Belafonte. Matt

lives today in a home his family bought on the Peninsula in 1955 for \$35,000.

Before the accident, Matt was a two-way lineman at El Camino College with interest from Brigham Young University, when his accident happened. In June of 1991 he was a passenger in a car which was leaving a party in Thousand Oaks. Matt was thrown thirty feet down a ravine.

But Matt Thomas was a fighter. As he recovered most of his abilities, he took up hydrobiking for one – perhaps you've seen him pedaling in Newport Bay.

"Who is that crazy guy on the bicycle in the bay?" one attendee jokingly said post-event to Thomas. "Now I know, that was you."

Thomas isn't only the world recordholder for hydrobiking from Catalina to Long Beach, he's a photographer, inspirational and educational



Pair of Remys: Jon and Dad Richard at the 2023 Balboa Summer Parade



Gridiron Star: That's El Camino, two-way lineman, Matt Thomas, #73. And get this, future NFL-star Jamal Anderson, #22, back row.



Matt Thomas shared his inspirational story at the Balboa Island Museum.

Matt frequently pedals his hydrobike in Newport Bay and is the world recordholder for hydrobiking from Catalina to Long Beach.



speaker, and he's established a foundation "for folks in comas, brain damage, head traumas from accidents...hey, I'm about to start learning karate with a guy who had a brain injury in 1980."

Attaboy, Matt!

HEY ABBOTT

The newest exhibit at the museum features the watercolor paintings of Newport Beach artist, Barbara Abbott.

"Very detailed work," Museum Executive Director Tiffany Pepys Hoey said of Abbott's art.

RICHARD THOMAS REMY, 1923 - 2023: 100 YEARS OF FUN

Of all the fun stories and videos I've had the privilege of writing and producing for Balboa's Museum over the last five years, none made me smile like our "Legacy Video" of Jon Remy and his

father Richard. If ever there was a father and son who exuded "best friends," it was the Brothers Remy – just look at the photos in this story.

The affection was so deep, Jon was able to coax CBS2 to come down to the American Legion in September to shoot a feature on World War II, Air-Force Pilot Richard, on the occasion of his 100th birthday. "At 100, you're free," Richard said.

Stanford graduate and Air Force pilot Richard Remy, an avid sailor and lover of life, passed away October 17, 2023.

"Dick had a full life, 100 years full of fun and adventure, you will be missed," Jon said in posting the news to Richard's friends and his Island family.

Thank you for the laughs, Richard.

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