

THE ISLAND

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Happy New Year
Islanders!

Milestone Year: Museum Topped List of So Cal Faves

Fun Zone Fest, Vets BBQs, Sold-Out Speaker Events Spurred Year of Accolades

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

The Balboa Island Museum Newport Beach likely staged its busiest year in 2022, myriad events at the Museum and in the community. It's almost a slight to lead the 2022-highlights story with an accolade. But consider the accolade:

LA Times readers tabbed Balboa's museum as a "2022 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.

"How can we be in the same league as a major museum? President Emeritus and Founder Shirley Pepys said. Truly an honor, grateful to our community, all who travel to visit."

Just look at some of the competition: Bowers Museum, Discovery Cube Orange County, and Orange County Museum of Art.

"It's entertainment and cultural, Shirley Pepys said, dinners to entertain locals, speaking events that appeal to visitors county-wide, scavenger hunts for children of visitors and history for their parents.



Jack Callahan asks the Paparazzi to respect his privacy



to pull it off again."

Linda Young and her company, Newport-based Elite OC Productions, staged the memorable evening – a perfect capper to Year Four of the new Balboa Island Museum Newport Beach at its 210 Marine Avenue home.

BIMNB capped 2022 with the 2nd Annual Fun Zone Festival. The amusement-park themed evening is the nonprofit's biggest fundraiser, and sponsors were a who's who of Museum and Island benefactors.

The evening was filled with food, games, and music from local-fave The Reflexx – as FZII delivered on its promise that you can be a kid again.

"Fun, magical evening, Museum Executive Director Tiffany Pepys Hoey said, thrilled

Other 2022 highlights:

- The museum hosted Sunday-night dinners, guest speakers and even a theatrical event, the Tin Box Theatricals performing "Celtic Christmas," on December 1.
- If crowds and decibel levels are the criteria, there was no bigger speaker event than the March "AirCal Speaker Panel." It was a raucous evening of stories and memories from AirCal alums and patrons, recalling that magical time of Newport Beach's 'hometown airline,' from 1967-1987.



AirCal speaker event, standing room only

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“Like an old movie where the psychiatrist helps the patient conjure up an old memory and the floodgates burst, Stewardess and Balboa Island Resident, **Susan Riddle** said. We had a collective bursting of the memory dam.”

“Ran into someone a few days after at Balboa Bay Club, Museum Founding Member and President Emeritus Shirley Pepys said. They told me ‘You brought the fun back to Newport Beach.’”

- If the AirCal alums provided the belly laughs, **Wing Lam** (Wahoo’s Fish Taco’s), his parents, and fellow Chinese émigré, **Youlen Chan**, who’s family founded the famous Phoenix Bakery in Los Angeles, provided the warm feelings before another sellout crowd. They were all featured guests on a February evening.

The Museum staged a joint celebration: Of these families that had emigrated from mainland China ultimately to Southern California; and of the Lunar New Year, celebrated in China and other Asian countries in February. 2022 was The Year of the Tiger. “The great American story, Museum President **Paula Castanon** said. So uplifting, these families, not from much, came here and worked hard and found success.”

- The Museum decorated its gallery with hanging red lanterns, and showcased photos and stories of the Lee family, including an iconic photo of **John Wayne** and **Mr. Lee Cheong Kwong**, Wing’s dad who opened Shanghai Pine Gardens, and credits Mr. Wayne’s selling out the restaurant for helping him bring Chinese food to the Island.



Balboa Island’s own Speak Easy

- Museum benefactors stepped up with financial and logistical support for special events for museum members—the “Party on the Ferry Tour,” courtesy of David and Seymour Beek, and a members-only event at the historic “Speak Easy” cottage on Garnet, hosted by Erin and Jim Moloney.

- The Memorial Day BBQ at Balboa Island Park was one of a number of events and deeds the museum continues to sponsor on behalf of our Island veterans, believed to approach 300 past and present. About 180 Island vets have shared their history at <https://www.balboaislandmuseum.org/veterans/>.



“Greatest BBQ we’ve ever had. People kept coming,” **Bill Stewart** said. Stewart started the tradition and chaired this year’s event – 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.

Museum Board Member **Dennis Bress** served as master of ceremonies, his wife **Summer Bress**, sang the “Star-Spangled Banner” and kudos to son **Nigel**, Stewart said, “they ran around buying all the food. Dennis even provided the Spam.”



MC Dennis Bress addresses the record crowd at the Veterans Day BBQ



NBFD grillmasters serve it up at the Museum's Veterans Day BBQ on November 12th



Paddington Bear in the 2022 Balboa Island Parade

- The museum followed up Memorial Day with its Balboa Island Veterans Day BBQ 2022, Bress giving props to the “chefs” from Newport Beach Fire Department. “You all rock and thank you to all who helped and made the event super special for our Vets and Community.”

- A Brit was among the stars of new exhibits and in-store events. There were sold-out art classes this summer taught by local artist Eve Nycz, exhibits on the aforementioned AirCal and Catalina Island, and the Kid’s Section added the Paddington Bear Exhibit to coincide with The Queen’s Jubilee. The beloved character in British children’s literature and modern culture, **Paddington Bear** also marched with the Museum’s entrants in the Balboa Island Parade.



- Speaking of the parade, it was fitting and deserved that **Shirley Pepys**, for all she does for Balboa Island, was bestowed the honor of being the Grand Marshal, riding in style in **Tim Mang’s** Rolls Royce.

- The Museum’s collection of some 50 Legacy Videos and Oral Histories can now be enjoyed on NBTv Channel 3 and at <https://www.balboaislandmuseum.org/oral-history/>.

- First up in 2023: January 18th-Speaker Event/Book Signing with longtime Newportresident/philanthropist/and author **Barbara Bowie**, presented by the Nixon Foundation. February 22-Speaker Eventwith **Jim Byron**-CEO and President of the Nixon Foundation.

- There’s a lot more to come in Year 5 and beyond – special events and education and curation of our shared history. Andmore work to be done to keep the Balboa island Museum Newport Beach as a lynchpin of Marine Avenue and Island social life. Museum Board Member and Little Island Resident **Tony Guanci** looks back and forward when it comes to the museum.

“My highlight to date, that’s easy, Guanci said. Working with Shirley (Pepys) to find a permanent home for the museum on Marine Ave. (Now) The biggest goal is to help build an endowment for the museum for it to be self-sustaining.”



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>