

GLP *Living*

FEBRUARY 2020

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR
RESIDENTS OF GROTON LONG POINT

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT
Dot Reiser's
Musical Journey

**This Month's
Sponsor Spotlight:**
Grover Insurance

**Featured
February Event:**
See StoneRidge in Mystic &
Stay for YNHH
Westerly Hospital's
Presentation "Updates and
Innovation in Stroke Care"
on 2/21

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community spotlight

By Gregory Pettys



Dot and Carl

Dot Reiser

Follow the Bubbles

Dorothy Reiser, known as Dot, is an ocean community singer-songwriter whose songwriting style never settles down, swapping back and forth between genres. Sometimes it's jazz, sometimes folk, gospel, reggae, or musical theater. Her passionate lyrics will make you look at today's world in ways that evoke laughter, tears, and invite conversation.

"Singing makes me happy and it keeps me well. Years ago, I was diagnosed with postpartum depression and amidst diapers, carpools, and 'what's for dinner', my creativity screamed for attention and I became determined to find my voice again. I coined the expression, 'Follow the Bubbles,' which to me means following my heart to find its next destination." Dot described the bubbles as feelings of

energy and interest which eventually led her more and more into songwriting, song recording, and the community that comes with collaborating with other musicians and artists. It was a long journey to find her voice but anyone listening to her music would say that she's found it.

Raised in Indianapolis, Indiana Dot was the youngest of eight children.

Her love of music developed mostly through osmosis, through the constant rotation of music on the family turntable spanning Broadway, The Carpenters, Elton John, Led Zepelin, and The Beatles. Dot's grandmother, Christine Magruder, was a classical pianist and soprano whose portrait hangs in Dot's home studio. Dot's mother, also named Christine, instilled a love of symphony orchestra and musical theater with annual trips to a big show.

Dot attended North Central High School in Indianapolis which had an excellent music department. She learned she had a love of harmony and it's become a large part of her music today. Dot didn't realize that this musical background, which was

forgotten for about thirty years, would one day become her passion.

Attending Purdue University after high school, she studied interior design. "When I got out of college I got a job in Hartford, Connecticut. I designed with a team. We did the interiors of corporate offices, banks, and if the economy was good we were doing nice new corporate headquarters, big commercial spaces. If the economy was bad, we were doing school asbestos removal and prison design," Dot shared, noting the contrast.

Dot met her husband, Carl Reiser, around this time and after they were married they moved to Mystic where they raised four children. Dot became a homemaker and stay-at-home mom.

She then described what happened next. "I don't know how to start this story. The challenge I had was postpartum depression with my last child and it was pretty serious. The doctor turned it around pretty fast. I think that put me on the avenue toward looking a little deeper inside myself. My faith grew and I volunteered to work at Saint Mary's Church in Groton. The church gave me a job as a youth group leader and that got me out of the house and out into the community. It was really helpful."

As a youth group leader Dot organized parties for young people and decided they could use a band. "Let's get some guitars; we've got to get some Christian Rock in here," she laughed. "So I got a guitar and a teacher and

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At the Farmer's Market

got some friends to help me get some music going and I just never stopped. I really liked the job and did it for seven years. We had a priest that really believed in community and getting people involved so it was a fun time. Best of all this work led me to music.”

During that time, Dot took an online course about the Old Testament. “I got intrigued by the Ten Commandments and that was what started my songwriting. I began writing one song for each commandment. I would take a commandment and try to make it mainstream. I’d ask myself, what does that mean to me now? Or, how can you get a good message out there in the world now?” The commandment, ‘You should not bear false witness against your neighbor,’ became don’t gossip and don’t tell lies about other people. This was the idea for her song “Outta The Loop”.

I wondered if Dot considered herself a professional musician. “That’s a big word.” she laughed. “I’m not sure what that means. I’m just really passionate about music. I feel that I’m writing songs at the perfect time. One song I wrote is called ‘Children Gonna Play’ and I had a video made for it and I put it on Facebook. One of the verses in the song takes place in the country of Burundi in Africa, so I targeted the audience there to see what might happen. When I looked at the Facebook page there were one hundred thousand views, somehow it just caught on in Burundi. I was astounded. That was super good news to me because I feel I’ve got something to say and I want people to hear my songs.”

Dot described how she came up with the idea for “Children Gonna Play”. “My son Joe was practicing piano in the other room. It was a song by Handel, and I thought, ‘that’s got a catchy melody,’ so I stole it.” She laughs. “The verses basically had Handel’s melody, but the chorus was new. I thought I’d just write a fun little song about how my children used to play. I admire children, especially in their ability to find play no matter what their circumstances may be. Rich, poor, wartime, peace, they find a game in the midst of smoke. I wondered how children play in really poor countries. I had a friend from Burundi so I wrote him and asked, ‘how did you guys play?’ He gave me a few very beautiful stories and that became one of the verses.

At the time, Aleppo was being bombed and I thought that surely the children there don’t play. I Googled it and this image came up that really blew

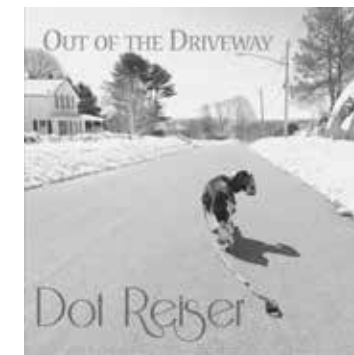


The Reiser Family

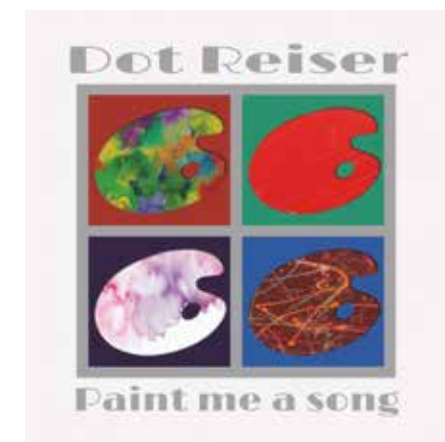


Singing to nursing home residents

me away. It showed a huge bomb crater in the road that had filled with water and all these kids were using it as a swimming pool having a wonderful time. I wondered what it is about children that after losing so much they can still find play. I just marveled at that and that became the song.”



Out of the Driveway was produced at Dirt Floor Studio in Haddam, CT in 2016



Paint Me a Song was produced at Quinn Music in Griswold, CT in 2019

Dot’s music takes a happy, upbeat, fun-loving approach to the positive message she wants to get out to her audience. “I think my songs started as Christian-contemporary because as a youth group leader I was on fire with my faith at that time. That’s where a lot of my energy was going. Now, they’ve moved more mainstream, just trying to put light out into the world.”

There are many venues locally where Dot is able to share, as well as grow, her musical talents. In the Mystic area, she likes to participate in an open mic called Original Songwriters Night in Mystic hosted by Linda Bonadies and Scott Parry at The Water Street Tavern on the first Thursday of the month. “It’s a really great listening room environment, allowing only original songs, so we get a really interesting mix of music. For songwriters trying out their new songs, it’s a very welcoming and supportive place to play. I also like to sing at Nightingales Acoustic Cafe in Old Lyme. They have songwriters performance opportunities in a listening

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room environment, and it's also very welcoming and supportive. There is a CT Songwriters Association open mic in Groton that I enjoy as well as the Groton Congregational Church and the open mic nights at Perks and Corks in Westerly. All are a lot of fun and great community."

Dot has found many ways to help people through her music. She moved to Weekapaug, a community on the coast in Westerly, RI a few years back, and performs her music to hospice and Alzheimer's patients at The Elms, Chestnut Cottage, and other Westerly, RI facilities through Beacon Hospice volunteering. "As a song leader for memory care patients, I have witnessed how the lost memories of Alzheimer's and dementia patients can come to life with the help of an old, favorite song. The lyrics or vignettes in my song Memory Care come directly from the memory care residents in my singing groups. Singing familiar songs miraculously teases their memories to the surface."

If you ask Dot what genre best describes her music, she can't give you a specific answer. She laughs, "Like teenagers, my songs have a mind of their own and that's what I love about them most. They always surprise me and push me to explore new forms of expression. Some lean toward jazz, some toward folk, and an occasional outlier decides, 'I am reggae' or 'let's rock!' My songs find their own voice and they help me find mine."

There's no doubt following her bubbles has led Dot to where she needs to be. "It makes me really happy if somebody says they've connected with a song or they thought it was funny or it made them cry. I don't think I'll ever make a dime off of this, but I hope I can make a small difference. As a mother of four and one who has volunteered a lot with church kids and elders, I want my songwriting to explore the challenges and joys for all ages. I believe that music is meant to lift people up and bring people together. I hope to shine a little light into the darkness, even my own."

You can find many of Dot's music videos on her YouTube channel, dotreiser. To listen to some of Dot's music, you can also visit her website at <https://www.reisupstudio.com>.

She will be performing a new solo show to go with her new album, *Paint Me a Song*, this summer at the Weekapaug Inn on July 31. Keep an eye out for more information on that in our local events listing in upcoming issues as the date approaches.



Dot's "Outta the Loop" video features local residents posing as "gossips" and footage at Fenway Beach in Weekapaug.

lawn & garden

2020 TRENDS IN LAWN AND GARDEN



By Shauna Osborne

As with most things, trends in outdoor décor, techniques, and even plant life come and go. One year, tidy and manicured hedges are hot; the next, mini-greenhouses are all the rage. Though the gloom and chill of the current weather outdoors compel us to hibernate, let's remember, spring is just around the corner! Start daydreaming about these developments in lawns and gardens for 2020, so by the time the sun begins to warm your bones, you'll have a plan in place to have your outdoor space looking stylish and refreshed!

One major trend that has been hot and continues to grow this year is **bringing indoor spaces outdoors**. Imagine cooking your dinner under the stars each evening, surrounded by the comforts of top-of-the-line appliances, cabinetry, and seating. Gourmet *outdoor kitchens* have become quite popular, with technical innova-

tions constantly developing to make your culinary experience smarter and easier. Newer to the scene are *outdoor living rooms*. Long gone are the boring wooden benches and uncomfortable plastic chairs of your former outdoor entertaining space; look for stylish outdoor furniture, such as hanging chairs and long dining tables, that is weather-resistant yet sophisticated and inviting. Furniture is definitely the place to splurge in your outdoor space!

Another movement for 2020 is **wildlife-sensitive environments**. While planning a garden to coexist with beneficial birds and bugs certainly isn't a new idea, what is becoming more urgent all the time is the need to *protect our wildlife friends* that have been negatively impacted by harmful agricultural practices of the past. Fortunately, it's easy to incorporate elements that welcome and promote

wildlife in your garden, such as *planting native fruit-bearing trees* and *bee-friendly* rhododendron and lavender, which encourage pollination. Build an *arbor to harbor native vines*, which is lovely to look at, maximizes use of outdoor space, and invites important pollinators like hummingbirds to visit. Lastly, a *beautiful birdbath* adds both style and usefulness to your space, as birds need clean water all year round for drinking and bathing — win-win!

In general, lawn and garden trends are moving toward **sustainable, low-maintenance, native, and seasonal arrangements**, and away from impractical, finicky spaces geared toward owners' tastes exclusively. In 2020, skip the stress and rediscover your joy in nature. Implementing ideas like the ones above means your outdoor space will be an elegant oasis, welcoming to plant, animal, and human friends alike!