

Fashion in flight



Cappadocia
(in Turkey),
\$250



STEVE MALONE/NEWS-PRESS PHOTOS

Joan Rosenberg-Dent wore a Flightbag over her shoulder when she left the Santa Barbara airport for a recent trip to Washington, D.C., to see several grandchildren. The fashionable purse is named Saigon for one of the many trips she has taken around the world.

Montecito artist creates chic purses during airplane trips

By **MARILYN MCMAHON**
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

Thin as a whippet, Joan Rosenberg-Dent — who wears a size 00 — is a stylish grandmother who recently celebrated her 30th wedding anniversary with her husband, Dr. Thomas Dent, a retired surgeon.

The peripatetic couple, who live in Montecito, just returned from a trip to Washington, D.C., to visit several grandchildren, and in October, they will fly to Morocco for a delayed anniversary celebration.

Ever since their 1982 honeymoon in Japan, the twosome have been flying all over the world — Dr. Dent attending medical meetings and conferences and Mrs. Rosenberg-Dent, a talented sculptor, giving lectures and presenting workshops. The couple have a blended family of six children.

“I was spending a lot of time on airplanes, feeling as if I was wasting my time. My hands can’t be idle, which is why I began knitting Flightbags,” said Mrs. Rosenberg-Dent, wearing crisp, all-white, slim-leg pants, a sleeveless top and slingback wedges during an interview in the studio of her contemporary home, overlooking the Andree Clark Bird Refuge, that she helped design with local

FYI

For more information about the Flightbags designed by Joan Rosenberg-Dent, call 708-3907.

architect Jeff Berkus soon after moving to Santa Barbara in 2000 from Philadelphia. “I call them Flightbags because each is named for a destination where I have flown, either by myself or with my husband — Tasmania, Saigon, Vienna, Stockholm, Maui, to name just a few.”

“While my husband was at meetings, I had a lot of free time, and there were just so many museums and libraries to see. I began collecting unusual fibers in different countries. It gave me another layer of interest. I could communicate with women all over the world,” she said.

But once the graduate of Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan got home, she wondered what to do with the fibers.

Her decision to knit them into purses had a hurdle.

She didn’t know how to knit or purl.

Please see **BAGS** on **D6**



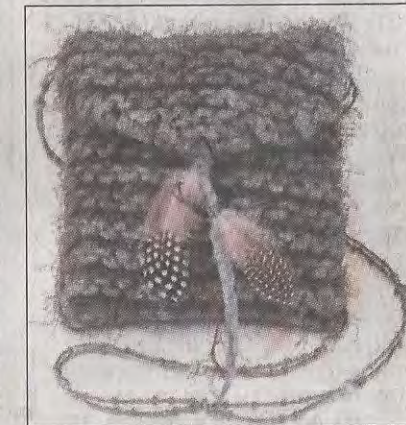
Designer Joan Rosenberg-Dent’s signature is a tiny silk rose sewn under each flap.



Stockholm, \$300



Tecate, \$300



Tasmania, \$300

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Saigon, \$250



Maui, \$150



Fethiye (in Turkey), \$250

Beads used for the bags are collected from travels

■ BAGS

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"But my mother did. She taught me over the phone, telling me to hold my left hand like a gun and wrap the yarn over my thumb and index finger, and then use the knitting needle to make a stitch," Mrs. Rosenberg-Dent said with a laugh. "My mother-in-law taught me how to cast off — in person. I have been knitting ever since, always when I fly somewhere."

Getting her knitting needles past security has been no problem, and she never ceases to attract attention from other passengers, some of whom want to buy the purses when they are finished.

"The flight attendants are especially fascinated," said Mrs. Rosenberg-Dent.

The elegant purses are all the same size and style. Each is about 7 inches square with beaded shoulder straps and linings of China silk. A tiny silk rose is sewn under each flap.

"The rose is for Rosenberg,"

"I try to put things together that are totally opposite to create tension or interest — fuzzy with smooth, dark with light, thin with thick. I use different size knitting needles to see how the fibers knit up."

Joan Rosenberg-Dent
creator of Flightbags

said Mrs. Rosenberg-Dent.

Where the purses differ is in the fibers, which range from thick robing and cellophane to lace, wool, acrylic and thin eyelash yarn. She chooses them for their texture and color.

"I try to put things together that are totally opposite to create tension or interest — fuzzy with smooth, dark with light, thin with thick. I use different size knitting needles to see how the fibers knit up," said Mrs. Rosenberg-Dent.

"For example, my Saigon bag is made of apple green and white velour with white eyelash yarn and accented with delicate white

feathers. I love to use feathers," she said, pointing to the Tasmania bag of felted gray wool with brown curly eyelash yarn and trimmed with brown feathers.

The double-strand shoulder straps of "tiny, tiny beads" are accented with larger beads, each different and strung at different distances apart, some 3 inches, others 2 or 4 or 5.

"I go for asymmetry, which makes my bags playful and fun to wear," said Mrs. Rosenberg-Dent.

Like the fibers, the beads are collected on her travels.

"But I stopped stringing them on airplanes because they would

fall on the floor, and the other passengers would help pick them up," she laughed.

Although her bags, which range in price from \$100 to \$300, are available in an array of colors, the black ones are most popular.

"They are just as cool with jeans as they are with evening wear. So are all my bags," said Mrs. Rosenberg-Dent, who said she sells as many as she makes, mainly by word of mouth.

She also donates them to local nonprofits for fundraisers, and lately, cruise ship passengers from luxury liners in the harbor have been alerted to her studio.

"They love my bags," said Mrs. Rosenberg-Dent.

And so does she, but she stresses that "it's not about the end product. It's the discovery of what happens when I put different materials together. It's all about trying things out, all the different possibilities. I keep asking 'What if?' ...

"It's the discovery that is exciting to me."

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