

# The Lake Merritt Institute

*LAKE TRASH REMOVAL, FOUNTAINS, EDUCATION, LAKE MANAGEMENT EXPERTISE*

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**PLEASE DON'T FEED THE CROCODILE:** He's big. He's blue. And he (she?) is in Lake Merritt. You can see it across the Lake from the broken down dock by the Lake Merritt Hotel. First found trying to crawl up an old wall, it was recently noted out in deeper water. Of course its not an alligator, they don't live in salt water. How it got here we haven't a clue. Maybe he swam in from the Berkeley shoreline.



**THE RETURN OF DR. JIM CARLTON:** As a young boy around Lake Merritt, Jim Carlton was fascinated by marine life. Along the shoreline and in the water, he found all sorts of strange critters, including the exotic tube worm known to scientists as Mercierella. By 1966 he had compiled the most complete list of Lake Merritt life ever published, a list that is still used today. As he grew, so did his interest, and his knowledge. Today, he is recognized as a world expert on invasive marine life (critters that were not here originally, but came from elsewhere). From his position at the Maritime Studies Program of Williams College & Mystic Seaport in Connecticut, he brings students to maritime locations around the nation, including Lake Merritt.

Why Lake Merritt? Because our tidal lagoon is a showplace for invasive species. Because many, perhaps even most, of the marine life in our salt water lagoon is not native. It was not here before modern day commerce started spreading species willy nilly around the globe. At least one of the

critters here came from South America. Striped bass were carried out from the east coast by train. Ballast water from ships at the Port of Oakland bring in who knows what, and we have found a fish common to southeast Asia in the Lake. Other invasives include east coast salt marsh grass (we uprooted it) widgeon grass (harvested by the hundreds of tons in the summer) and yellow finned gobies.

Watch for him on TV: So well known is this Lake Merritt alumnus that he will be featured on a National Geographic Special on invasive species this spring. In addition to being interviewed, Dr. Carlton was portrayed as a young boy exploring the Lake. A local film crew used a student from St. Paul's school as the role model; even bought 60's style clothes for him in Berkeley.

A prominent career in marine science: And it all began right here at Lake Merritt.

**DOCK PROJECT RE-STARTED:** Finally: The Lake Merritt Breakfast Club and the City have executed an agreement by which: The club will withdraw from direct participation in the Lakeside Avenue dock renovation project; the Club will donate the current renovation to the City; the Club will donate to the City about \$41,000 raised for the dock; the City will recommence work next spring and complete it in 2004; and the City will provide additional funding, mostly through grants from the State. So, even though more than a year and probably the good will of donors has been lost by the City take-over, the project will proceed. City staff have been in touch with the Gondola folks, and the new structure will be boat friendly. We hear it will even have benches, and perhaps lighting. Hopefully they will also use overhead deterrents to keep sea gulls and other pooping birds away. This will be by far the best dock around the Lake, and perhaps a model for renovation of the other docks with DD funds.

**JACK LONDON AQUATIC CENTER BEGINS HIGH SCHOOL WOMEN'S ROWING PROGRAM:** Starting in January; women in the Oakland public schools will be able to take part in a new rowing program. More details in the January newsletter.



L. to R. David Coy, Andrew Wong, Jim Montgomery

**FOUNTAINS: New 18<sup>TH</sup> Street Fountain Installed:** Its anchored and tied to the dock. Plastic tubing protects the underwater cable. A double walled junction box houses the circuit breakers and controls. It is lighted at night (the red & green lenses will be replaced with clear ones after the holidays). Sacrificial anodes have been added to the new float design to reduce corrosion, and the factory has made other improvements. We give thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Andrew K.C. Wong for their generous donation.

**Embarcadero Fountain:** A new motor has been provided under warranty to replace the one damaged by an apparent power surge, and the unit should be back by the

columns before Christmas. We have replaced a light socket, scraped off the barnacles and fixed the intake screen. **Glen Echo Fountain:** The Public Works electrical department has requested that we disconnect the fountain from their meter, and install our own power line, duplicate and parallel to theirs. We have requested that DD funds dedicated to "aeration" be used to replace this unit, but no response has been received from the City Attorney's office regarding the use of DD money

for fountains. Bandstand Fountain: This unit was vandalized. We hope to have completed repairs in time for the holidays.

Lake Merritt Needs Storm Drain Filters. Shown here is trash from the first flush of the watershed during this rainy season. One wonders what these gulls and cormorants think of it.

Almost all of the trash shown here could be captured by storm drain filters before it reaches the Lake.

At present, one demonstration filter catches trash from 12 acres of our 4,650 acre watershed. Three more filters are in the planning stages by DD staff, and a water quality task force may consider other locations for filters.



**DD UPDATE:** The DD citizens coalition will meet again on Monday, December 8<sup>th</sup>, probably at a recreation center in District 5. Topics will include attracting matching funding for DD projects and Union Point Park. The next Executive Team meeting will be on December 10<sup>th</sup>.



Fall and early winter are the season for cormorants at the Lake. They are shown here on the boating barrier, which is extended across the Trestle Glen arm in winter for the protection of migratory birds. Flocks of up to 1,000 or more come and go during these months, and can be seen herding schools of fish underwater.

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS:** Caroling on the Lake and the three big Christmas trees that formerly reflected over the waters are long gone, but Lake Merritt is still a nice place to be at Christmas. Why not enjoy a Gondola ride with hot cider and Italian carols? The big beautiful boats hold up to six, and there are several of them for groups. Go at night when the Necklace of Lights burn bright, or during the day when winter ducks from the north are flying around. Who knows, you may see the ghost of the Merritt Queen or flickering red and green lights over the water. But watch out for the crocodile.

The Lake Merritt Institute is sponsored and supported by the Oakland Public Works Agency

