



# Marina del Rey Historical Society



Volume 2, Issue 1 ~ January, February, March, April 2013

## "Mud Lake" aka Lake Los Angeles

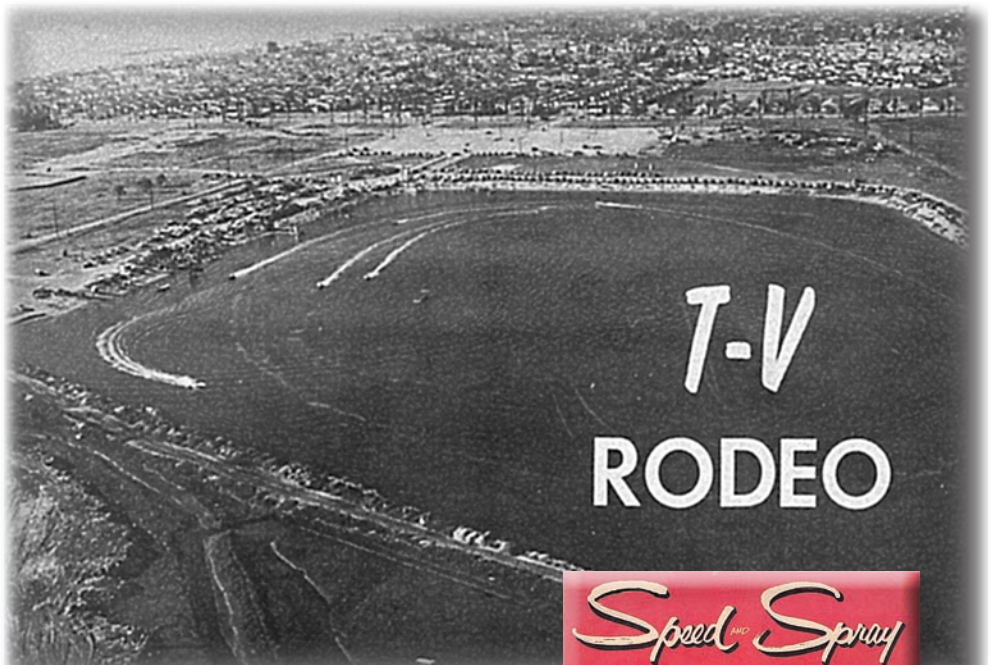
### Marina del Rey Area History

by Willie Hjorth

From the February, 1956 issue of *Speed and Spray*, a vintage magazine of powerboating, coverage of stock outboard boat racing was headlined "SPEEDBOAT RODEO HUGE T-V SUCCESS." Quoting the article in part, "Certainly all the drivers of Valley Speedboat Association and other clubs deserve not only just the thanks of sponsors and producers, but from all boat racing members all over the country, because what is being done here on the small sporty lake in Los Angeles, will influence the entire racing fraternity." That "sporty lake," which was also known as Lake Los Angeles, was known as *Mud Lake* to the locals. It was developed into the largest man-made recreational small craft harbor in the world (at that time).

#### Donation

The Marina del Rey Historical Society has been fortunate to receive this valuable magazine scan donation from Marina del Rey dedicated sailor/



Aerial Photo of the Speedboat Rodeo taken from a Goodyear Blimp - "Lueders' photo, circa 1950s

yachtsman Michael J. Priest whose father, Frank Priest, is pictured (see photo on page 3) and named as one of the co-producers of the show, shown along with TV announcer Dick Lane.

#### Mothers' Beach

The history of Marina del Rey has repeatedly referred to Mud Lake as the swampland water pond used for



*Speed and Spray* Magazine Cover, February 1956

Continued on page 3

# The Dream Fulfilled

by Howard Wenger

(Part 3 - Continued from July-Sept. 2012 Issue)

World War II had halted any planning of the marina in L.A. County, but on September 7, 1949 the Army Corp of Engineers submitted another report on the feasibility of construction for a pleasure craft harbor for 8,000 boats at an estimated cost of \$23 million dollars.

In 1953, the County Board of Supervisors sponsored state legislation which would grant the city a \$2 million dollar loan to assist in a new harbor site. Then, in 1954, President Dwight Eisenhower would sign Public Law 780, making the marina harbor an authorized federal project. Next, on November 6th, 1956 a general election resulted in county voters approving a revenue bond which would finance the remainder of the project.

Seventy years after the initial idea, in December of 1957, construction finally began on the main navigational features and by November 1958, the entrance channel jetties were completed.

However, there would be one more setback before the marina's completion and dedication.

In the winter of 1962/63, shortly after the harbor opened, the marina would suffer

major storm damage. A strong surge pushed into the harbor damaging boats and docks. The Army Corp of Engineers initiated an emergency program to provide protection from future wave action. Temporary protective baffles were erected till a more permanent barrier could be constructed. A model study was underway at the Army Corp of Engineers waterways experiment station in Vicksburg, Mississippi

Construction of the offshore Marina breakwater began October 15, 1963 and was completed by January 1965. The planning, funding and construction showed a strong working relationship between County and Federal Governments.

From the dreams of M.C. Wickes in 1887, several World Wars, numerous starts and stops on different government levels, major development problems, and Mother Nature...the marina would finally be completed.

The formal dedication of the Marina del Rey harbor was held on April 10, 1965.

On April 10, 2015, Marina del Rey will celebrate its 50th anniversary of the opening of the harbor. //

## Sabot Builder



(The late) Sidney Blinder, circa 2000

(Excerpts from "the Dinghy" magazine, October 27, 1972)

Much of the boom in sabot racing at Marina del Rey and elsewhere can be attributed directly to Sidney Blinder, who as the world's largest manufacturer of Sabots now builds and sells about 1,000 of these little boats each year, with one recent order coming from as far away as Guam."

"Locally, Sabot racing began at Redondo Beach, and in La Ballona Creek before the Marina was built. Among early racing skippers in what was called the Muddy Feet Series of Sabot races in La Ballona Creek were MacCameron Jones, Wade Hill and Sidney Blinder. During this period the Win'ard Sabot evolved. It was also during this period that MacCameron Jones founded Windjammers YC, with many of these Muddy Feet Regatta competitors as fellow members." //

(The full article may be viewed, online, at <marinadelreyhistoricalsociety.org>)

## Skiing on the Mud



The Williams family (l-r) - Martha Ann, Aliene and Bill - John M. Stanley photo, circa 1956

To see a 1950s home movie video of water skiing on Mud Lake:

- 1) Google *Mud Lake Los Angeles*
- 2) Go to Page 2
- 3) Click on *Mud Lake Culver City*

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## Acknowledgment

We are very grateful and express deep appreciation to the Priest family for their donation to the MdR Historical Society.

The era of pre-Marina del Rey development is full of recreational tales. The Historical Society welcomes any and all photographs, articles and oral histories.

The Society's new website <marinadelreyhistoricalsociety.org> will ultimately record the "news." //



# "Mud Lake"

(Continued from page 1)

early small sailboat races as well as powerboating and waterskiing. It is the development site of *Mothers' Beach*, today called Marina Beach on county planning maps. The *Muddy Feet Regatta*, the first Marina del Rey organized yacht race, began as early sailors tell of wading through the mud with their boats to start the races on about four feet of water.

## **Waterskiing**

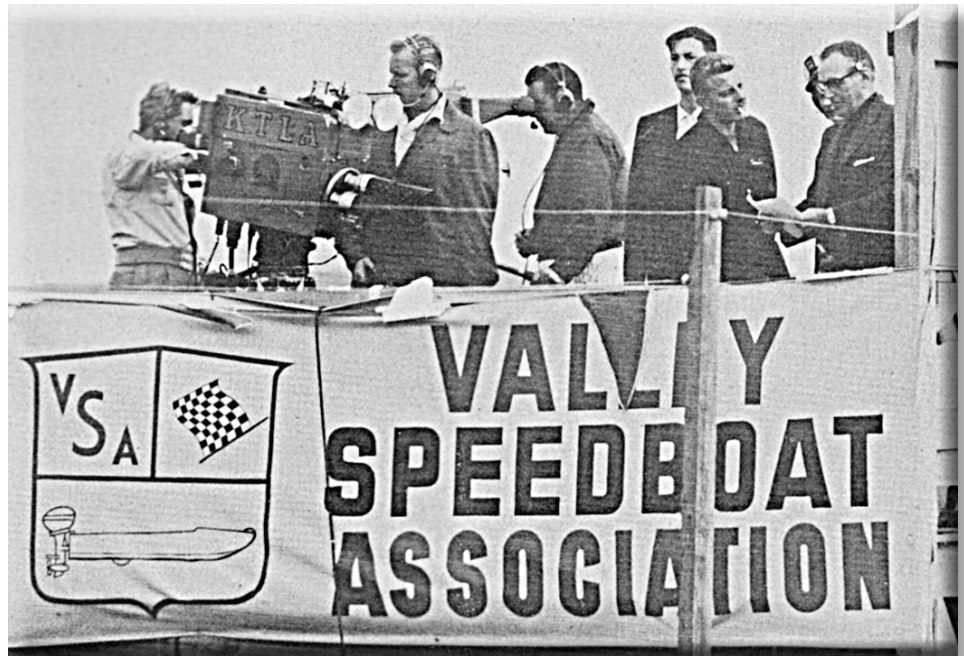
Jim Hokanson (founder of Hokanson's Sails in 1962) tells of sailing and waterskiing on Mud Lake, possibly formed as a result of the U.S. Corps of Engineers cementing the walls of Ballona Creek to control the constant flooding of the area. Jim, a retired policeman from Culver City, recalls that Sidney Blinder, an early sailor, developed the *Sidney Sabot*, eight foot sailing dinghy for which Jim contracted to make the sails for many South Coast Corinthian Yacht Club members. Sailors used a hoist in the middle of Santa Monica pier to launch and sail 13 foot long lapstrake Delta sailboats prior to the eight foot sabot sail boat becoming popular and very easy to handle.

## **Dredging Footprint**

The late 1950s photo (on the right) shows "D" Basin dredging to connect the old Mud Lake to the Marina. Later, sand was imported to form the present popular Mother's Beach on the former banks of Mud Lake.

The footprints of the future basins, yet to be dredged, are all outlined in white.

Today Mother's Beach is a great location for family outings and a safe place for children because there is a lifeguard on duty and it has gentle waters with little surf. There are picnic shelters nearby with plenty of picnic tables and barbecues. There are climbing



On top of the judges' stand, left to right: KTLA staff, Frank Priest, Leonard Newman, co-producers of the show and Dick Lane, TV announcer



"D"Basin dredging on Mud Lake to connect it to the Marina main channel. circa late 1950s

gyms and a pirate ship.

It's a favorite launching spot for canoes and other paddlers. Adventure seekers

can try windsurfing or kayaking. It is also the current storage facility for the Marina del Rey Outrigger Canoe Club //

*"If we do not collect, preserve, and digitize the history of Marina del Rey, much will be lost."*



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Stamp

*"If we do not collect, preserve, and digitize  
the history of Marina del Rey,  
much will be lost."*

***Reminder...***  
**Renew your Membership  
dues and donations.**



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**marinadelreyhistoricalsociety.org**

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***MdR Historical Presentation***

If your organization would like to view  
a presentation of the history of Marina del Rey,  
please contact:

**Debbie Talbot at 310-821-5242,**

from the MdR Historical Society,  
to schedule a Power Point presentation

***Save the Date***

***~ Happy Hour ~***

**March 20, 2013 ~ 5:00-7:00 p.m.**

Special Video Documentary of Marina del Rey  
by **Pat Reynolds**, Editor/Publisher, *The Mariner* magazine

**Marina del Rey Hotel**

13534 Bali Way, Marina del Rey

Free Admission/Free Parking

**RSVP Requested, 310-822-9344**