

# Richmond's Waterfront:

The bustling residential area around Richmond's Marina Bay was once a thriving industrial mecca where the Kaiser Shipyards were located during WWII. Richmond Kaiser Shipyards became the largest shipbuilding operation in the United States, producing an astounding 747 war ships with a workforce that swelled to 90,000.

The shipyards are long gone now. In their place are almost 2,000 homes – built, proposed or under construction – around the waterfront. However, two functioning ports: the city-owned Port of Richmond and the privately run Levin/Richmond Terminal just down the road, still exist as examples of industry thriving side-by-side with the residential communities.

One business that has set up operations at the Port of Richmond Terminal is the Auto Warehousing Company. AWC is the largest full-service auto processing company in the nation, handling nearly 4,350,000 automobiles annually at over 20 port locations throughout the United States. AWC's main business is importing automobiles from foreign manufacturers and distributing them to U.S. dealerships, but they also offer other services like cleaning and customizing. Since most vehicles come here in a standardized form, AWC can add custom accessories based on the dealer's or customer's needs. For instance, AWC might install a multi-disc changer, a roof rack or a spoiler on a new vehicle before shipping it to its



The Auto Warehousing Company can store up to 10,000 autos at the Port of Richmond

final destination. AWC can do customization for much less than the dealers can, and save everybody money in the long run.

AWC has been in business for over 40 years and has grown from two locations to over 20 locations today. In 2004, it opened its Port of Richmond location to handle Hyundai and Kia vehicles imported from Korea. Executive Director of the Port of Richmond, Jim Matzorkis, says, "[AWC is] an outstanding partner of ours that has brought the automobile distribution business back to the Port of Richmond, which used to be, kind of, the bread and butter, in terms of the main cargo for this port."

Matzorkis has experience working for another auto importer that worked out of the Port of Richmond in the past. This experience was invaluable in convincing Glovis, the

logistics arm for Hyundai and Kia, that the Port of Richmond was the best fit and location for the AWC.

"There was a need for a Northern California port" said Ben Seher, AWC's regional sales manager. "We also had a great leader in Jim Matzorkis. He, being from our industry, was really able to talk from both sides."

"Richmond has worked out excellent for us," Seher says, "The whole City Council has been fantastic to work with: they really pushed hard to get this project through in 2004 and stood by their word. There's been a great partnership between the Port, the city, AWC and Glovis. It's just been a fantastic working relationship."

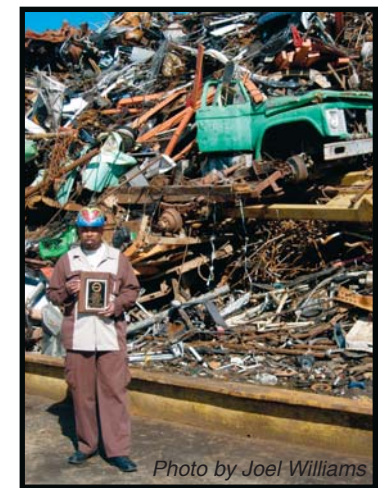
According to Matzorkis, there's still room to grow, "There's around 100,000 cars a year going through the facility,

and we're in the process of marketing to other customers as well, hoping that the throughput of vehicles will increase to three or four-hundred thousand vehicles within the next two years."

Another company, close to the Levin/Richmond Terminal is Sims Metal, a global metal recycling company, and one of the largest collectors and processors of secondary metals in the world. The company sits on approximately 12 acres of land on the corner of 4th Street and Cutting Boulevard, and processes about 25,000 tons of material a month. They accept everything from truckloads of scrap metal to individual computer monitors and plastic bags full of cans or bottles. Sims accepts things that people must pay to leave at the dump. For instance, you can drop off your old refrigerator

for no charge and Sims will handle the safe degassing of the Freon, according to government regulations, and then recycle the appliance.

Sims Group's website states they are, "committed to the ecologically sound and sustainable use of resources and



Jerrold Hatchett with one of the many awards that Sims Metal has received for community service.

# A Place to Be for Industry

strives to operate in a manner which minimizes waste and prevents pollution. Sims actively supports the protection of the environment and the role the recycling industry plays in conserving natural resources.”

These words are clearly backed up by the company’s involvement in supporting the local community. Not only does Sims employ about 100 people, many who reside in Richmond, they also run a union yard; and, they show a record of long-term commitment by reaching out to the city’s residents.

The walls of the offices at Sims are covered with plaques and awards. The company has associations with no less than 30

“Seventy percent of the people that work for me came from the streets of Richmond,” Hatchett says, “There isn’t any area of community services that Sims is not involved in.”

organizations and community activities. Recently, Jerrold Hatchett, the Division Manager who has been with the company for over 30 years, received the Humanitarian of the Year award for Contra Costa County.

As an example of their involvement and outreach to the local community, each summer Sims’ workers set up a series of drop points by providing dumpsters throughout the city

for people to dump trash that wouldn’t be accepted elsewhere. Letters are sent out through the neighborhood councils informing residents when and where local drop off points will be, and encouraging people to clean up their yards and remove old appliances that may end up in landfills or worse, abandoned on remote roadways. There is no cost to use this service. Sims Metal donates all of the

equipment and labor for this service, and each neighborhood receives a check from Sims for the value of the items collected. All of the money that would have been paid out for recyclables is reinvested in the Richmond community.

Sims’ location, adjacent to the Levin/Richmond Terminal, is essential for making a profit. According to General Manager of Operations & Engineering,

Joe Barco, “If you’re landlocked you have to ship by rail or truck to the closest domestic steel mill and, if they know that, you’re not going to get a good price. We compete on an international world market — if you don’t as a scrap dealer or recycler, you’re not going to do well. The majority of our material does go out by ships to places like India, Japan, China or Malaysia.”

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Photo by Susan Brand

Richmond’s picturesque commercial waterfront is unique in the great views it provides, in addition to providing space for successful industry and business ventures.