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LAPD Band

by Christina Challey

When you think of a police officer, you probably don't think of a musical conductor in the same thought. Enter LAPD detective and assistant conductor of the LAPD Concert Band, **Scott Walton!** Scott has combined his dedication to law enforcement with his love of music, and created an extraordinary career that incorporates both.

After beginning to play the tuba in the eighth grade, Scott went on to play throughout his school years, graduating from California State University, Fullerton, with a major in music and a degree in tuba performance. "As an instrumental music major," Scott says, "I didn't do much conducting. But because I played in many different bands and orchestras, I saw what I liked and didn't like in conductors, and what worked and what didn't. Conducting is not just getting the group to play together. It also involves listening to the different instruments and telling which ones to play louder or softer in order to get a good balance."

While still at Cal State Fullerton, Scott decided he probably wasn't going to make

a living as a professional tuba player, so he decided to become a high school band director. Along with this decision came classes in conducting—Choral, Orchestral, Jazz and Marching Band.

When it came time to commit to a full-time job running a high school band program, which is very time-consuming and labor-intensive, Scott decided the salary didn't balance out the time commitment. He said, "The job paid less than my part-time job running movie projectors!" That is when he decided to look into law enforcement because it paid well and had good benefits. And, he said, he also wanted to do something about bad drivers. "I got very upset by all the bad driving and collisions I saw, and I wanted to get out in the world and write some tickets!"

Scott tested for the California Highway Patrol and some other agencies, but the Los Angeles Police Department hired him first. He said when he took his oral interview for LAPD, he was asked why he thought he could be a police officer. He answered, "I stand in front of 85 high school kids every day and give them something to make noise with. If I can control that, I think I can control anything."

Scott said he had no idea how lucky he had gotten when he was hired by the LAPD. Not only did they have a large traffic program, but they also had a concert band! Scott says the LAPD Concert Band, along with giving him an opportunity to play his tuba and assist with conducting, has also given him incredible travel opportunities. He played with the band in Sweden for the Police and Fire Olympic



Playing tuba at a recruit graduation.



Conducting band rehearsal.

Games, and in Washington, D.C., when the band was there to dedicate the Police Memorial. During his trip to Washington, D.C., Scott heard bagpipes being played by the NYPD Emerald Society, and he was immediately drawn to the sound. Returning to Los Angeles with a new musical endeavor, Scott began practicing the pipes and went on to help form the Los Angeles Police Pipe and Drum Corp.

Scott says in rehearsals you communicate with your fellow musicians by talking. When conducting, you communicate with only your arms and facial expressions. "Conducting is also a great aerobic workout," he says, "and I can use all the help I can get there!"

For more information about the band, please contact Jim Starr,

executive director, at sngcop@aol.com. For greatly appreciated donations, please go to www.lapolicefoundation.org, and in the "notes box," put "for the band." ♦



Scott with his pipes.

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