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LAPD Band

by Christina Challey

"I feel the need for speed!" This quote from Tom Cruise in the movie *Top Gun* is a close representation of LAPD Band member and saxophone player Steve



Steve at recruit graduation.

Barnes. You may not associate this kind of comment with a saxophone player, but Steve isn't just any sax player. He's a sax player who loves to travel the fast lane on his motorcycle—his Kawasaki Concours 14.

But before we speed ahead, let's start at the beginning. Steve grew up all around Southern California, as well as, "a few other places far, far away." When he was in the fifth grade, almost 10 years old, the saxophone came into his life. "I didn't pick it, it picked me," he said. He also plays other woodwind instruments and some piano. He said his dad played some but hated to practice. His mom sang some, and today, his son Aaron, the oldest of his three boys, is a pro

bass player. Steve said he and Aaron recently played together at a three-piece jazz gig, which was a lot of fun.

Steve not only reads music, he can also play the saxophone by ear. He says about playing by ear, "There is no other way to play jazz, blues and rock 'n' roll. At the root of those is the ability to improvise—to compose new music on the spot. Stuff that has never been heard before. That is why it is hard. And why it is so much fun."

Steve said he has no real favorite style of music, but his favorite sax player is John Coltrane. He said John sounded different from everybody else. "I never wanted to sound like anybody famous," says Steve. "Why copy when you can be an original?"

Like most musicians, along the way Steve has had a few non-musical jobs, even one as a university professor. Also along the way, he found an interest in motorcycles, and then decided to get one. To show his true dedication to the LAPD Band, Steve rides his bike 83 miles—each way—to weekly band rehearsals! Of course, he always obeys the speed limit. But that doesn't mean he still doesn't "feel the need for speed."

To quell his desire to ride the fast lane—Steve said he always wanted to go fast—"not just ordinary fast, but 200 mph fast," he took up dry lake racing. He said, "It turns out that you can just go do it. There is an inspection, and some rules, and a rookie orientation class, but it is not too hard. Some people play golf, some people want to go 200 mph on a



Steve gigging.

motorcycle on dirt." "Why? Why not!" he added.

Steve has been on various bike rides, mostly solo. He said he did do a competitive rally once where he saw 42 states in 10 days. He said, "It was sort of a scavenger hunt with lots of things to find." Now his Kawasaki Concours 14 has over 160,000 miles on it, and he intends to continue adding to that count. Along with currently working on several projects and his jazz trio, he wants to continue taking long motorcycle rides to exotic lands. The LAPD Band is glad that Steve takes that long ride each week to the Police Academy for band rehearsals and recruit graduation performances—even though it is not an exotic land!

For more information about the LAPD Band, please contact **Jim Starr**, executive director, through email at sngcop@aol.com. For greatly appreciated donations, please go to www.lapolicefoundation.org, and in the "comments box," put "for the Band." ♦

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Steve with son, Aaron.