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LAPD Band

by Christina Challey

I wonder how many drummers started out their careers by creating their own drum kits out of pots and pans from the kitchen? Our fabulous LAPD Band drummer/percussionist, Steve Pember-ton, did just that. He even made his own bass drum pedal out of a few pieces of wood, some screws and a big rubber band. But how many drummers can say that when they moved away from home, the “nice elderly couple that lived next door” said they actually missed hearing the drums while he practiced? Yep, that was also Steve.

Steve grew up just outside of Philadelphia in Delaware County, Penn., part of Springfield Township. He said he is very proud of the area, as some very well-known people came from there: Tina Fey, Jim Croce, Todd Rundgren and Mike Scioscia, current manager of the Angels. “Mike was a year behind me at Springfield High School, and I was taught by his mother in elementary school,” Steve said.

In elementary school, Steve remembers having to pick between a trombone

and drums, and he settled on drums because they stand out in any musical group. When asked if he plays any other instruments, he said, “Does the recorder in high school count?” He also took piano lessons for a few years because he needed it to graduate from college with a music degree. He wished he could play like Oscar Peterson, but said, “I can’t even play like Oscar Meyer!”

While at Temple University as a classical percussionist, Steve became a member of the Diamond Marching Band, which he said was great fun. He said he still feels the *fun* when playing a cadence in the LAPD Concert Band. In college, he became fluent within the percussion family on tympani, mallets, hand percussion, etc. It was just these skills that provided the opportunity for him to play with over 130 orchestras around the world, including the Boston Pops, sometimes as a guest artist and sometimes as a member of the percussion section.

Steve said while touring on the road for 25 years, he was able to experience incredible things, such as “playing for royalty or sitting in the actual chair of

the flight director of the Apollo missions; performing at Carnegie Hall five times; and being invited to perform four times at the White House.” His greatest thrill was being invited to perform with favorite artists who he grew up listening to and watching on TV. People like Mel Tormé, Doc Severinsen, Marvin Hamlisch, Frank Sinatra, Jule Styne, Sammy Cahn and Johnny Mathis.



His hobbies outside of music include boating, computers, travel and working around the house. He said he’s always loved flying but never found time to get his license. When he was a member of the Boston Pops Orchestra, one of the bass players was a certified flight instructor, and he would take Steve on flights around the Boston area. “It was thrilling,” Steve said. He said he loves working with his hands and building things. He’s currently laying a new brick patio in front of his house!

Steve says he is especially honored to be able to give back in a small way to the people and place he calls home by being a part of the LAPD Concert Band. “You couldn’t ask for a nicer group of people, and I always look forward to performing with them,” he said.

For more information about the band, please contact Jim Starr, executive director, by email: sngcop@aol.com. For greatly appreciated donations, please go to www.lapolicyfoundation.org, and in the “Notes box,” put “For the band.” ♦



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