



LOS ANGELES SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT BAND

By Dawn Anderson

Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Band

A TRADITION OF SERVICE THROUGH MUSIC

The LASD Band has had a busy year, and we continue to rehearse and stand ready for Department requests. Highlighting our members continues to be an honor as these exceptional musicians amaze and delight me with their stories and their unselfish commitment to serve the LASD. I hope you enjoy their stories as well.

In this article, I would like to introduce you to some remarkable ladies of the LASD Band. First up is Joanne D'Abusco, a trumpet player who was born in New York but has been in L.A. since 1956. Her family took the leap and moved across the United States because her dad had a job offer in L.A. Things must have worked out because the family is still here. Joanne was always fascinated with music, but her education took her in another direction. She has a bachelor's degree in biology from UC Riverside and earned a master's degree in secondary education from CSULA. Using her education, she worked for four years as a research technician at the USC School of Medicine, but then she felt compelled to go back to school to get her teaching credential. Joanne proceeded to teach biology, physical science and life science for 35 years in the Glendale Unified School District.

About 20 years ago, Joanne gave in to her aspiration to learn music. Joanne decided the trumpet, with its rich brassy sound, would be her instrument because it is widely used in both band and

orchestra. She took music classes at PCC and Glendale Community College and continues to this day with private trumpet lessons. Joanne joined the LASD Band based on a conversation she had with one of our band members, Janet, who she just happened to "bump into" in the egg section of a grocery store. Janet invited her to a rehearsal, and Joanne claims, "I have been grateful for that chance encounter ever since."

Joanne is very involved now — serving a two-year term on the band's executive committee in addition to being a valuable member of the trumpet section. "Playing the trumpet with the LASD Band is a dream come true," she says. She is giving back in honor of her "baby sister," Sergeant Barbara D'Abusco, a retired 30-year veteran of the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department. Joanne, thank you for following your dreams and we are happy they led you to the LASD Band.

Next up is our oboe player, Sarah Bloxham. She comes to us by way of Washington, D.C., moving to SoCal when her husband was offered a job with Lockheed. As a youngster, music was always a part of her life. She and her sisters were all blessed with good voices and sang together as a group. Always "asked" to perform by their parents wherever they happened to be, they jokingly called themselves The Trapped Family Singers. As they got older, each chose an instrument to learn as well. Sarah chose the oboe around the time she entered high school, taking private lessons. Oboe is one of the most difficult instruments to learn to play because

it is a double reed instrument. The sound is made by two reeds vibrating against each other forming a mouthpiece. The reed is made from a special kind of bamboo and is very sensitive. The oboe is a beautiful and unique instrument that is challenging to master and has a very distinct sound.

Continuing her education, she earned a Bachelor of Arts in music and communicative disorders, Master of Arts in audiology and is currently working on her Master of Music in oboe performance.

Her musical experiences are grand, encompassing 45 years, though most were with her voice as her musical instrument. She has performed in 100 productions at the L.A. Opera House and had the privilege of performing at the opening of the Walt Disney Concert Hall. She sang with the Three Tenors for their concert at Dodger Stadium and traveled to Finland to debut *Don Giovanni* at the Savonlinna Opera Festival. One of her favorite stories is the time she untangled a pull wire that would be needed in a later scene while performing her part in the opera *Samson and Delilah*. The stage hand could not get it untangled prior to the curtain going up, so Sarah took matters into her own hands and untangled the wire while performing and saved the day!

Sarah says that creating music is "joyful, visceral and even frustrating at times, but creating music is always fulfilling."

She is happy to give back by volunteering with the LASD Band. Sarah is incredibly talented and is constantly improving her craft. We are happy that she shares her talent with us.

Our bass clarinet player, Karen Higgins, comes to us from Saginaw, Michigan. She only moved to SoCal seven years ago, following her grandchildren. Her music career began in the fourth grade, when she started to take piano lessons. Her older brother took clarinet lessons but quit after only one year, so Karen picked it up and has been playing ever since. Karen continued her education, earning a degree in elementary band music. After graduating, she taught for only a few years, opting to stay home and raise her family. She taught privately for many years.

She met her husband, Ron, in a community band during college, and together, they built a life of fun and music. Ron played the trumpet and came up with the idea to have a band on cycles. In 1976, the band took off and rode everything from unicycles to four-man tandems. This cycle-riding band made it to New York City to lead the 50-mile TD Five Boro Bike Tour. "Those were the fun days!" Karen says.





Karen was a church organist, playing for 60 years in various churches throughout the country, but now dedicates her musical talents to the LASD Band. Karen, thanks for bringing your fun-loving spirit to the LASD Band and sharing your story with us!

And last up is Virginia Moore, a native Californian born in Victorville, but soon after moved to Pasadena. From her earliest years, music has been in her life — first listening to many different genres, then singing in the church choir and finally strumming the ukulele while singing folk songs with her mother. Her first musical lessons were on the piano. By the time Virginia reached middle school, she was intrigued by all the band instruments. She was lucky to have an enlightened school music teacher who let her learn every instrument the school possessed. She played in her high school band and orchestra, and continued playing in college. Virginia majored in public school music and earned a special secondary teaching credential in music.

Virginia's musical teaching career took her to other countries. She launched her teaching career in California, but then it was off to Venezuela and



eventually winding up in Mexico. She taught for 44 years before retiring, and although she did not teach music her whole career, music was always an essential component of her teachings.

Virginia's fascination with different types of instruments did not stop in middle school, but continued throughout her career. She is accomplished on a whole host of instruments, some of them exotic and only played in specific areas. While teaching in Maracaibo, Venezuela, she learned to play the *cuatro*, a native Venezuelan instrument. Virginia learned to play the *guzheng* (a Chinese long zither) while performing with the Chinese Music Ensemble. She also learned the *oud* (a Middle-Eastern instrument) at PCC and performed with the Middle East Music Ensemble.

In the LASD Band, Virginia usually plays the bassoon, another double reed instrument that is very difficult to play. It is perhaps the most intriguing of the woodwind instruments. Commonly known as the “clown of the orchestra” because of its appearance and sound, the bassoon can play lower tones much louder than most of the other woodwinds.

Virginia did not pick up the bassoon until the age of 63 and began to learn the instrument because there are very few good players and the bassoon is needed in both orchestra and band. Learning the bassoon has afforded Virginia many performing opportunities in woodwind ensembles. It wasn't until the age of 73 that Virginia began to learn the bass guitar, proving it is never too late to learn. Virginia

plays the bass guitar in the LASD Swing Band when needed and is an integral part of the LASD Concert Band. Because she is proficient on many instruments, Virginia can play in whatever section of the band needs her the most. Virginia says that she cannot imagine life without music. “It has brought me so much joy,” she says. She plans to keep music in her life for as long as she lives. This seems to be the mantra for all our musicians! Thanks, Virginia, for keeping the LASD Band in your life!

We hope you call on us for your musical needs and use the LASD Band for your upcoming events.

If you play an instrument or previously played an instrument, it may be time to dust it off and join the LASD Band. If you would like to have one of our bands perform for an event, either the dance band or concert band (subject to Department guidelines), please contact me at Dawn.LASDBand@gmail.com. ☆

