

Interview with Alum Don Barrozo

BY JAY LONG

Don Barrozo is the film editor for The Simpsons™. With over 300 episodes, 15 years and countless awards to its credit, it is the longest running animated television program in history. He is also a busy performer in the Los Angeles music scene playing both trumpet and bass, as well as an active athlete and father. And most importantly, he played soprano in the '81 and '82 Blue Devils A Corps.



How did you first get into drum corps?

In the fifties, my brother marched with the local corps, the Golden Skyliners in Great Falls, Montana. So, Mom and Dad brought me down to a rehearsal at the corps hall in '75 when I was 12. I had never seen anything like it.

What was the draw you in?

Honestly, it was a little weird at first. It was just so cool. There was an attitude and intensity to which I had never been exposed. That's something that has really stuck with me throughout my entire life. And when I went to my first nationals, in Denver, I saw the bigger corps. That's when the world really opened up for me.

Is there any commonality between the different corps you marched with?

Sure, putting everything you had into the show and refining it. Developing the camaraderie you get by working hard with an extended — a huge extended family. I think any kid who gets to march is lucky whether they do it with Blue Devils or the Golden Skyliners because it involves a lot more than their competitive success. It's the



Jay Long and Don Barrozo marched together in 1982

experience of the extended family and the responsibility you have to all the other members.

What is your most memorable drum corps experience?

No question about it, winning DCI in '82. That was amazing.

I wish I could have that experience again. There aren't too many opportunities in life to do something like that. After it was over, I felt depressed, and, in retrospect, it was absolutely the right emotion to have. Once you leave it behind, it's hard to replace.

In what ways has the Blue Devils affected your adult life?

The Blue Devils are the absolute pinnacle of the activity. There is a culture of excellence there that sets a very high mark, shows you where that mark is and how to achieve it. I started doing yoga there, the running and physical training I do started there. All of these things had a big influence on me in terms of what I wanted in my life and from my life. Any kind of performance situation I find myself in, I still ask myself, "How would the Blue Devils do this?"

How did you get such a cool job?

I was an assistant film editor for a studio doing commercials and I didn't really like the work. I heard about an animation studio that needed some help on a new project. I knew about Matt Groening from his comic strip "Life in Hell" so I was excited to do it. This was before The Simpsons was anything, just an idea they were trying to get off the ground. It was a lucky break.

How does drum corps affect your current work on the Simpsons?

Film editing has a very rhythmic aspect to it. Having a sense of time and music really helps when it comes to tweaking the timing and pacing of an episode. It's surprising how many film editors are also musicians. Plus, the quality has to be there. I learned that with the Blue Devils. It has to be perfect. When it's time to cut an episode, it's like the last week before finals, not the Memorial Day camp. I can't waste any time and I have to be really organized.