

[Home](#)
[Performances](#)
[Membership](#)
[Merchandise](#)
[Email Lists](#)
[North Tunnel Echo](#)
[History](#)
[-Centennial Book](#)
[-Oral Archives](#)
[-Video Archives](#)
[-Bob](#)
[Council](#)
[-Committees](#)
[-Minutes](#)
[Contact us](#)
[-Facebook Page](#)
[-Facebook Group](#)
[-LinkedIn](#)
[-Twitter](#)
[-YouTube](#)
[Cal Band](#)

Interview With Bernard T. Rocca, Jr.

Version 3.1

Interviewee:

Bernard T. Rocca, Jr.

Interviewer:

Dan Cheatham, Drum Major 1957

Date of Interview:

July 7th, 1992

Transcriber:

Richard F. Wong

[Minor revisions for clarity and grammar by Dan Cheatham. Inserted by Tim Castro on 11/10/92 and 11/12/92]

[Barney has reviewed Version 2.1 of this interview and is content with the transcription. He stated that we could make additional minor changes as needed. So done by Dan Cheatham on 12/3/92. Inserted by Tim Castro on 12/4/92 and 12/13/92.]

[Following editorial notes are attributed as thus:

Norden H. (Dan) Cheatham - NHC]

Keywords: Tightwad Hill, University High School, Audition, Modeste Alloo, Charles Cushing, Hail to California Fanfare, Typical Pre-Game, Saturday Morning, Trips South, Ralph Edwards, Room 5, Cadence Tempo, Pregame Performance, Star Spangled Banner, Baton Society, Pajamarino Rally, Idora Park, Ernest O. Nagle, James Berdahl, ROTC Band, Band/ASUC Relationships, Don Mulford, Alumni Band Day, Women in the Band.

Dan: The date is July 7th, 1992. This side 1 of tape 1 of an interview with Barney T. Rocca, Jr. We're in his office in the Bank of America Building in San Francisco, on the 51st floor, looking out at a beautiful view of the Transamerica Pyramid next door. My name is Dan Cheatham.

Barney: My name is Bernard T. Rocca, Jr. I am a Junior because my father was also very active in the same business and in the same community that I was. I am a long-time California resident. I've lived here all my life except for 4 years, during World War II, when I was in Washington DC with the War Food Administration. I've been engaged in international trade since I graduated from college. At college, I was a student at the University of California, in Berkeley at the College of Letters and Science, majoring in Economics. I graduated Phi Beta Kappa. I was active in the band and a member of the Sigma Phi Society [Fraternity]. Before that, I was a graduate at University High School in Oakland from which I also graduated with honors.

Dan: What instrument did you play in the Band?

Barney: I played the flute in the Concert Band and the piccolo in the Marching Band.

Dan: When was the first time you were aware that there was such a thing as the University of California Marching Band?

Barney: I can't be sure, but it was when I was just a young, young person. I was always a strong rooter of the University of California. My father, my uncles, my aunts, had attended the University and I was always a Bear Backer from the word, "Go!" even when I had to stay up on Tightwad Hill because I couldn't afford the price of admission and the Cal Band was always one of the things that impressed me.

Dan: So, Barney, you were sitting at Tightwad Hill in its earliest day. Surely there were fewer and the view must have been a lot better.

Barney: Well, the view wasn't perfect, so I'd try to sneak into the stadium whenever I could and tried to pretend that I was going to be a vendor or something like that. Sometimes I was able to do this, but occasionally I would be able to get a ticket from a friend. I had some older people in the neighborhood who could occasionally get tickets for me.

Dan: Do you have any recollections from those Tightwad Hill days that would help us understand what the band was like -- its marching style or its performances or anything.

Barney: I can't remember anything particularly except I loved the California songs and I liked to hear the Band play.

Dan: Somewhere along the line, you had to make the conscious decision that you wanted to be a member of the Cal Band.

Barney: I can't say that I consciously was thinking of the Cal Band, but I did join the University High School Band, which was an ROTC Band, and I did intend, when I graduated to apply for membership in the Cal Band.

Dan: Where was University High located?

Barney: University High School was located in Oakland, but it drew students from Berkeley as well as well as Oakland, and it was a practice teacher's school for the Department of Education at the University of California. It was difficult to get in. You had to apply as you do nowadays at private schools. University High School eventually was closed about 12 years later because of racial tensions.

Dan: Specifically where in Oakland was it located?

Barney: It was located on Grove Street [Now named Martin Luther King, Jr. Way - NHC], very close to the Oakland/Berkeley border. It was about 3 and a half miles from my home in North Berkeley.

Dan: Share with us your arrival on campus and how it happened that you actually became a Cal Bandsman.

Barney: After graduating from high school in May of 1932, I took 6 months off to make a trip to Europe and I entered the University, then in January I went to the Stephens Union to apply for membership in the Band and they said they'd have to give me an audition. Well, I hadn't been practicing for a long time and the first thing that I was asked to do was play the piccolo solo in the Stars and Stripes Forever and, actually, I didn't pass the audition. He said come back in another week, so I came back a week later, and by that time, I'd practiced enough to pass. Well, he said, "You're not very good, but we'll take you." [Ironically, when Barney played in the Alumni Band for the 1992 Arizona game, the piccolos were featured in The Stars and Stripes Forever March. There were 15 or 20 piccolo players. With a twinkle in his eye, Barney pointed out to me that he was the only male in the group. - NHC]

Dan: Who was "he"?

Barney: I can't remember his name ... It was Dick something and I think he was either Student Director ... He was not the Drum Major but he was a Student Director.

Dan: Then it was another student you were auditioning with. It wasn't the adult director of the band? [Barney shakes his head "No, it was not the Director of the band."]

Who was the adult presence in the Cal Band when you first arrived on the scene?

Barney: It was Modeste Alloo, I knew his son, who lived ... the Alloo's lived in the same part of North Berkeley that I did, but I did not know Modeste Alloo. He was a very exacting director of the band and, of course, in the Spring semester, it was the concert band, not the marching band and therefore, we played more concert-type of music, in which case I played the flute instead of the piccolo.

Dan: We have very little information on Modeste. Would you give us as much insight as you can to help us understand him?

Barney: Well, what I can tell you is that I thought he was a member of the faculty at the University of California. He was a strict disciplinarian. He wanted everything to be exactly right for the Concert Band. He didn't seem to have any interest in the marching aspects of the band activities. He was primarily interested in our musicality and wanted to be sure that we were performing properly as a Concert Band. We had one concert that Spring Semester that I remember. I don't remember whether he was still leader of the Band in the Fall or whether Charles Cushing had already taken over by that time.

Dan: Your first experience with the Cal Band, then, was in its concert band mode? [Barney shakes his head up and down, "yes."]

What are your memories of your first involvement with the band as a marching unit in the football season of 1934?

Barney: Well, actually I was more interested in the Marching Band aspects. That's where I had seen the Cal Band perform in the past and, of course, at University High School, I was in a marching band and I wasn't good enough as a musician to really enjoy the concert work, so when we got into the marching aspect of it, I enjoyed it much more. Well, before we became a marching band, of course, we had to get our uniforms and my first uniform didn't fit very well, but I was able to come back and exchange it for one that fit better. I was very proud of that uniform. I was very pleased and I had a full length picture taken of me in my band uniform. My wife tells me it's not a very good picture, but I cherished it. The Marching Band as I remember it, was almost entirely a student activity. Charles Cushing, who came along later and

who's the adult leader of the band during my tenure at the University of California did not seem to participate a great deal. One thing I do remember about him is that I think he composed the fanfare which we still use to this day. The other thing that I was impressed with was entering the stadium with the Lights Out March. That is still a very stirring thing to me, something I'll never forget!

Dan: I'd like to talk about the Hail to California Fanfare because I agree with you this is a very, very special piece of music. Is it your recollection that it was written the year that you arrived on campus?

Barney: It was not there when I first joined the band. It was written afterwards and it was one of the contributions which Mr. Cushing gave to the band. He had a difficult time in my recollection of the first year or so because he was taking the place of a very accomplished musician and he was dealing with people he didn't know and people who had remembered how Mr. Alloo did things so he had difficulty the first year or so, but by the second year he was much more in control of things.

Dan: What was a typical pre-game performance like in your first year, which was the football season of 19 ... 1933?

Barney: We marched onto the field eight abreast and about twelve deep. I think we had a hundred people in the band at that time. Maybe a hundred and eight. We played Lights Out March all the way through. We went down the field, did a countermarch, and then ended up in front of the rooting section playing the trio to Lights Out. I'm not sure, but I think that after we had addressed the Cal rooters with a Cal Song, we would go over and face the opposing side and play their school anthem.

Dan: Do you have any recollection of how the Star Spangled Banner was performed?

Barney: At some of the games, we did play the Star Spangled Banner in combination with the visiting band, but I don't remember that we did it at every game.

Dan: Did the guest conductor direct it?

Barney: I think not!

Dan: What was the sequence of events on a Saturday morning between the time you arrived at Room 5, Eshleman, and when you marched out on the field from the North Tunnel?

Barney: I don't remember well but I know we had a practice session in the morning, probably around ten o'clock on one of the fields. Not in the stadium as they do today, and then we would convene at Eshleman Hall and we would march up to the stadium and we always enjoyed having the rooters who were walking up to the stadium at the same time. We would go in through the North Tunnel and wait for the team to get through their warm-up ceremonies and they'd come back through the band and then we would enter the field.

Dan: That sounds very similar to how it is today although they have a number of routines they go through - singing certain songs, like, for example, The Ship Titanic.

Give us your recollection of a typical half-time performance.

Barney: As I recall it, we usually formed into a Big C for Cal or we may have done the Cal Script. I don't remember when that was introduced, and then we would also give some kind of a tribute to the visiting team either spelling their name out, UCLA or whatever.

Dan: Did you travel South during your freshman year?

Barney: Well, we went down to UCLA and to USC during my tenure at the University and we went by train. It was always a very enjoyable experience. One of the members of the band had a girlfriend he smuggled on board ... I remember that as being "Gee! That guy's got it made!" We also had a trip to the State Fair in September, and actually, I think I made three trips to the State Fair at the request of the Chamber of Commerce, I believe of the State of California and they paid our way, including the hotel accommodations.

Dan: Do you have any special recollections of the trip South to the UCLA and/or the USC game?

Barney: We stayed at the Biltmore Hotel on our trip South, as I remember it, and we did have meals paid for at Clifton's Restaurant/Cafeteria. My friend, Clark Bradford, and I had an opportunity to visit some friends of the family and we spent the night there. We didn't spend it at the hotel, but the band was at the hotel, as I remember it.

Dan: There was a yell leader who, in later years became very famous in television and later had a very special role to play with the band going to the Brussels World's Fair in 1958. Could you tell us any remembrances you have of someone named Ralph Edwards?

Barney: Well, I remember him well because he was an outstanding personality not only afterwards, but during his performance as yell leader at the University of California. He was able to really get the Rooting Section going and we all admired him a great deal.

Dan: So Ralph was a real showman even in his student years?

Barney: Yes, he was and he still is!

Dan: I'd like to get your recollections of the arrival of Charles Cushing as Director.

Barney: Well, he was very different from Modeste Alloo and I had the feeling that he was not completely comfortable with dealing with the situation. He didn't know all the people, as I've mentioned earlier and it took some time for him to really get into the swing of things. There was some grumbling in the band because things were different under Cushing than they had been before, but eventually, Cushing seemed to surmount these difficulties.

Dan: When things finally settled down, how would you describe the working relationship that finally evolved between Cushing as Director and the student officers in the band?

Barney: As far as I know Cushing was only there for our rehearsal times and he didn't seem to take much interest in the Marching Band as far as I was able to tell. I think he was an accomplished Director. Once we got used to his style he got along well with the band. His main problem, as I remember it, were just in the first year, while he was getting acquainted.

Dan: Would you describe what it was like to be a bandsman and have access to its quarters at Room 5 Eshleman Hall?

Barney: I don't really remember too much about that. I know that we considered Eshleman Hall as our headquarters.

Dan: Did the Band do much in the way of parade marching in those days?

Barney: I don't recall any particular parade. The drum beat was the same as it is now, as far as I can tell.

Dan: The band always prides itself on its ability to march at a tempo faster than any other band in the vicinity. Would you tell us about the

tempo that was used during your day?

Barney: As I hear the band now, it sounds just very much like the same band that I played in and I marched in. I know we had a fast tempo.

Dan: How did you feel about that? Did you wish that they'd march a little slower?

Barney: I liked the drum beat! I really, still to this day, I'd rather march to that beat than I would to a slower one.

Dan: You found it to be inspiring?

Barney: Absolutely!

Dan: The reason I'm asking about that is because that drum beat was written by Charles Cushing and I'm not sure whether it was written when he was still a student, or whether it was written after he arrived as conductor for the Band. Your recollection is that they were already using that cadence as you were arriving in your first year. But Cushing had not yet arrived as Conductor. Is that correct?

Barney: That is my best recollection. I could be mistaken about that but the only drum beat that I remember is the one I hear today.

Dan: I'm going to assume that it was written during his student days, which brings us to the Hail to California Fanfare. It was my suspicion that it appeared about the time of his arrival as Conductor and you've confirmed that. Can you give me any insight as to what might have motivated him to write it?

Barney: No, I can't really. I know it was very impressive and I think it did a lot to solidify his position before the band that he had made this kind of a contribution.

Dan: Describe a little bit more specifically just how the Fanfare was played and its role in the pre-game performance?

Barney: We certainly didn't wander out of the Tunnel. My recollection is that we marched out, about to the goal post, stopped, played the Fanfare, and then went into Lights Out.

Dan: Likely, you came out the North Tunnel to the goal post area on the drums [He nods his head up and down, yes] at which point you played the Hail to Cal Fanfare, went into Lights Out March from the beginning, marched down the field toward the South goal post ...

Barney: ...countermarch...

Dan: ... did a countermarch, returned back up to about the 50-yard line ...

Barney: and turned to the Cal rooting section...

Dan: ... in time to be playing the Trio of the march. [He nods his head up and down, yes]. Subsequent to that, probably through the use of a countermarch, you then faced the opposing rooting section and played their fight song in honor to them as our guests [He's nodding his head up and down, "yes," all this time]. After honoring the opposing rooting section, you would then, very likely through the use of a countermarch, wind up on the Cal side of the field and leave the field for your seats in the stands.

Barney: That is my recollection.

Dan: What role did the Star Spangled Banner have in all of this?

Barney: I don't recall that we played the Star Spangled Banner at all the games. I do remember playing the Star Spangled Banner in concert with the opposing band but I think it was more an occasional performance than it was routine performance.

Dan: Tell us about the Baton Society.

Barney: When I was a Junior or a Senior, I'm not sure which, the leadership in the Band said they were organizing an honor society and would I be interested in a membership in this society? They had a pin and they had an initiation service and my buddy, Clark Bradford, and I were initiated into the Baton Society. I don't know whether it had existed prior to my induction, but I remembered it as being newly organized at that time.

Dan: So, then there's a possibility that the Baton Society first started in the 1930's?

Barney: ...5 or 36 ...

Dan: Do you have any recollections of the initiation for the Society?

Barney: We were told that the purpose of this society was to further the interest of the band and that membership would be offered to anybody who had shown a dedication to the band. We didn't have any real program but we did get together for the introduction of new members

into the Society. There was no banquet or smoker that I recall. We did have meetings primarily for the purpose of inducting new members into the Society.

Dan: Give us any memories you have of Bonfire Rallies in the Greek Theater.

Barney: Well, that was always something that I enjoyed. The whole band usually didn't show up. There wasn't room for us but those of us who were interested in it did enjoy going to the Bonfire Rallies. The Freshmen had the obligation to bring up the wood and the stuff that goes on the fire and the Sophomores set the fire and the band played and there was usually a program, "Beat Stanford," particularly. We also, as I recall, had occasional rallies before the USC game.

Dan: What was a Pajamarino Rally?

Barney: Yes. Well a Pajamarino Rally was before one of the major games, probably the USC game, and the students came in their pajamas. I don't remember any particularly outstanding experience, but my father, in 1916, no, he was the Class of '15, remembers a Pajamarino Rally where things got out of hand and they commandeered the streetcars and went down to Idora Park and took over the place and the police had to come in and make a lot of arrests and after that, they couldn't have a Pajamarino Rally for a couple of years, but we enjoyed a Pajamarino Rally. I only remember one and nothing untoward happened in the one that I attended.

Dan: The bandsmen wear pajamas, too?

Barney: No, I don't remember that. Maybe we did, but I don't remember that.

Dan: Tell us where Idora Park is.

Barney: Idora Park was in North Oakland and it was an amusement park with merry-go-rounds and roller coasters and amusements. The kind of thing that you get on the Beach [Referring to a major amusement park formerly located at the "Beach" just south of the Cliff House in San Francisco. To get there, you took a Street Car labeled "Beach." - NHC]. They closed down sometime in the late '30s or early '40s. The real estate became too valuable. It was in North Oakland probably between Telegraph and College somewhere around 40th Street.

Dan: 1935, there was a drum major named Ernest O. Negel. Could you give us any insight to him?

Barney: He was the one drum major that I remember best of all. He was very tall, very able and he did an excellent job.

Dan: There's another student bandsman in your years that subsequently turned out to be very important to the band, and that's James Berdahl. Could you tell us about Jim?

Barney: Well, he was one of the Student Directors and we used Student Directors in our practice sessions more than we did the professional conductors and I remember Jim because he was very proficient and also he was an excellent musician. When he became Director of the band in the 1950's, I thought, "Well, isn't that nice?" that somebody who grew up from the band has taken over a position of this type.

Dan: While you were a student, did you participate in the ROTC program?

Barney: Yes, I was in ROTC, but I was in the Coast Defense Artillery.

Dan: The ROTC program was broken up into several sub-branches, just as the real Army was...Signal Corps, Engineer Corps, etc.

Barney ...Navy...

Dan: There was a Navy ROTC on campus then, too?

Barney: Yeah, there was an ROTC program and Captain Nimitz was in charge of this program and he was a neighbor of ours and his son, Chester Nimitz was my age and he was in the same scout troop I was in [As a Five-Star Admiral, Chester Nimitz Sr. was the Commander-in-Chief in the Pacific (CINCPAC) and in coordination with General MacArthur, conducted the battles in the Pacific in WWII. Only about a half-dozen people in the U.S. have ever reached this rank. - NHC].

Dan: Give us some insight to the relationship between the ROTC Band and the Cal Band.

Barney: As far as I know, there was no relationship except some of the members of one band were also members of the other band. I was in the ROTC in high school but I was not in the ROTC Band at Cal. I was just interested in the Marching Band.

Dan: Give us your insight of the relationship between the Cal Band and the ASUC?

Barney: The Cal Band was financed by the ASUC and we were part and parcel of the student body program. Well as far as I know, the ASUC bought us our uniforms, they paid our travel expenses. I thought that the professional leaders of the band were paid by the University (as Faculty Members). [A similar situation existed in Athletics too. Intercollegiate Athletics were a function of the student body. All the financial and administrative aspects were an extension of the ASUC, but the coaches were faculty members in the Department of Physical Education. Not only did they coach the Intercollegiate Teams, they also taught P.E. classes - NHC]. All the other band expenses were paid by the ASUC and, as far as we know, they were financed by the proceeds from the football games and other athletic endeavors.

Dan: Give us a few words about the role of the ASUC on campus.

Barney: The ASUC stands for the Associated Students of the University of California and it was a student-run and student-financed operation. The President was elected by the students. The ASUC operated with its own Board of Directors and its own officers. They had their own financing independent of the University as far as we knew and they supported all kinds of activities where the students were involved. The Band was one of those. The students were obliged to become members of the ASUC. They had to buy an ASUC card. It cost us ten dollars but that gave us free admission to all the student activities, including the football games the basketball games or any other activity that the ASUC sponsored so actually the ten dollars was a very good buy for what we got.

Dan: In another oral history we talked to Don Mulford. What are your recollections of Don Mulford?

Barney: He was an excellent musician. He didn't participate in the Band so far as I'm aware, but he had his own dance band, which was one of the better known dance bands in the Bay Area. I think this continued even after he graduated from the University and then he became a politician and a very successful one. I don't remember ever having danced to Don Mulford's band, but it certainly had a good reputation.

Dan: Give us a brief resume of your career subsequent to your graduation from Cal?

Barney: After graduation, I entered into the business world with a firm called Pacific Vegetable Oil Corporation, which was involved in the importing and processing of oil seeds and also the domestic production of oil seeds such as flax seed and soy beans. During WWII, four years after I graduated, actually 6 years, in 1942, I went to Washington D.C. to be with the War Food Administration. I had been discharged as physically unfit from asthma and, therefore, couldn't serve, even though I had the ROTC training. After four years in Washington D.C., I returned to become an officer in Pacific Vegetable and Oil Corporation as vice- president. I became president in 1957. I retired from the firm after it had become a small multi-national firm, doing business throughout the world in importing, exporting, and processing of vegetable oils. We had operations in the Philippines, in Japan, in Latin America, principally in Mexico and Colombia, and in Europe. After I left the firm and retired for 2 years, I became involved in my own firm and in starting up the Pacific Commodities Exchange in San Francisco. In 4 years, the Pacific Commodities Exchange had to fold but I continued with my own operations as a dealer in vegetable oils internationally.

Dan: Reflect back over the years and ad lib on anything that you feel is important to have as part of this record that we're recording here.

Barney: Well, my experience with the University was a very pleasant one. I learned a lot and I enjoyed it a great deal. I enjoyed the esprit de corps of the band, I enjoyed my fraternity life with Sigma Phi, and I enjoyed the educational experience. I took six months of Graduate work because I graduated in December and I wanted to participate with the Class of '37 although officially I'm a member of the Class of '36. My family has been associated with the University for three generations. My father, one uncle one aunt, my brother, and my sister all graduated from the University and I believe that I got so much from it that when I was able to do so, I was pleased to donate a chair in international trade to the School of Business at the University of California. The band, being a very important part of my enjoyment at the University, has always been one of my favorite institutions and I have been sponsoring band activities to the extent that I can in making contributions. I was a member of the Chancellor's Circle to the University of California along with other activities that the University does. I'm hopeful that we can rebuild some of the spirit that we used to enjoy at the University when it wasn't taken as a controversial issue that you were patriotic or that you were a strong believer in the University and its various programs.

Dan: I'd like to thank you very much for the time that you have taken from your busy life here on the 51st floor looking out over the beautiful San Francisco North Bay. I certainly do admire the view from your window up here.

I would like to vouch for the fact that Barney has been an active member of the Alumni Band. I can remember seeing you participate in Alumni Band Day probably from it's beginning. [He nods his head up and down, "yes."] In fact, although I intended to cut this tape off, maybe I should ask you, "Do you have any comments to make about the beginnings of the Alumni Band?"

Barney: I was very pleased to get an invitation when we were talking about the first appearance of the Alumni Band and it was an extraordinary experience because we had maybe 140 members. We had more Alumni Band members than they had in the band the first year. Subsequent years the attendance fell down, but now it's building up again because we're getting a lot of women coming into the band and this is one thing that I think is great improvement. The young ladies that I get the pleasure to meet at these Alumni Band performances, they can show me things about marching that I never knew!! And I always thought I was a pretty good marcher, but compared to them, I'm a neophyte. They were wonderful!

I'm going to take this opportunity of saying that it's been great to have the chance to meet Dan Cheatham. He is an extraordinary benefit to the band. His enthusiasm and his dedication to what we all stand for is exemplary.

Dan: Thank you for the compliment and this will conclude the interview. Interview with Bernard T. Rocca, Jr.

[Printed 01/31/94]

[Home](#) | [Performances](#) | [Membership](#) | [Email Lists](#) | [North Tunnel Echo](#) | [History](#) | [Council](#) | [Contact Us](#)

The California Band Alumni Association, Incorporated © 2018 UC Regents

Send web comments to: cbaa-www@calband.berkeley.edu

Last modified: March 12, 2011 15:48:23.