

# dream jobs

## Twins double up for documentary film-making

[ Alex Richardson ]

The Bailin sisters are easy to pick out. They dress alike, talk loudly and talk at length. They're almost always at work, either on schoolwork or on one of their movies.

Yes movies – they actually make award-winning documentaries in their spare time. They've made several so far, and one of their latest, *Return to Sender*, won inclusion at the Los Angeles Film Festival.

"I am still getting over the fact that we're going to L.A.," Emma said. "I guess a part of me dreams about us being on stage, talking about our film and Steven Spielberg, or someone like him, standing up and clapping. But then I remember that's reaching past the moon and into Never-never Land."

Sarah writes the narration for the movies and does the majority of research, and Emma does the editing and film work.

Their film ideas all have to fit in certain criteria – they have to relate to Arkansas and the events have to have happened between 30 and 80 years ago.

"From there we ask some of our historian friends and wait for inspiration to strike. Most of the time we are drawn to a topic because of an interesting story or fact. For *Return To Sender*, the hook was a story of a woman calling a hospital late at night screaming There's a naked Cuban in my tree!. We just had to explore that story further," Emma said.

*Return to Sender* was an extremely difficult project for them. The film is about a band of Cuban refugees who were stationed in Fort Chaffee, a town in Arkansas near Fort Smith.

"When we first started researching, we couldn't find an ending. Our father told us to give up, but we refused," Sarah said.

"After six months of constant



Documentarian sophomores Emma and Sarah Bailin's Web site documents their flourishing career. PHOTO BY DARLECIA WILLIAMS.

hunting, we found out what had happened to the Cubans. We used multiple newspapers, had nine interviews and collected over a hundred government memorandums. The stack of research was 6-inches high."

The trouble continued.

"At Fort Chaffee, Sarah was the one sitting on the side of the car closest to the fort, so she got to get that great shot we used for the credits. But for my favorite picture of the flag, I was the one to get stung by barbed wire while Sarah was yelling at me to get higher," Emma said.

For all their successes as filmmakers, neither of the sisters wants to be one professionally.

"Movie-making isn't for the faint at heart – just the naive," Emma said.

The time investment is a major issue for them, as their films take about a year each to research, film and edit.

"As much as I love film, I really don't much care for the actual editing part. Mostly I love pitching and

showing our films," Emma said.

Though they don't plan to pursue film as a career, they are proud of their work, which started when they were 11. Some of their first movies were for the EAST Lab program at Horace Mann Middle School, and since then they've produced many "promotional films, two television commercials and three live action-films."

"Truth be told, I feel more constrained by live action than history. When you do live action, you have to think of a plot and plots invariably turn out sounding cliched. But history is already written for you; you don't have to think of a story line," Emma said.

"Besides, there is always a new untold history story just waiting to be brought into the light. It's so much more rewarding knowing you have saved a small patch of our story from being forgotten. Plus, I'm rubbish at

writing dialogue."

They get a great deal of satisfaction out of making the films. They enjoy the accolades, and most of all they enjoy telling the history.

"Whenever the stack of research gets too high or the editing machine looms too large over my shoulder and I want to just give up, I ask why I do it, why I suffer. Is it really worth it? And the answer comes back to me: Yes, it's always worth it," Sarah said.

For more information on the Bailin twins and their productions check out [www.doubletroublets.com](http://www.doubletroublets.com)