

# Capital day for the Minuteman Marching Band

by [Sarah R. Buchholz](#), *Chronicle* staff

More than 280 members of the Minuteman Marching Band, "The Power and Class of New England," marched down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington Jan. 20 as part of the presidential inaugural parade. The band's efforts received recognition from media, alumni and government officials.

"We worked one of our best miracles," said band director George N. Parks of the group's effort to reunite in Amherst, rehearse, and travel to Washington during Intersession. Parks was notified on Dec. 23 that the band had been selected to march in the parade.

"It was fast and furious e-mails," he said. "I got several of our student staff members to help, and they made phone trees [to let other band members know about the upcoming appearance]."

At least one student came from as far away as Nebraska to join the parade as students scrambled to return early from their winter breaks. The Minuteman Marching Band includes students from more than 90 Massachusetts cities and towns and 16 other states.

"When I showed up on Wednesday [Jan. 17], that was the first day I saw the band," Parks said. "We had one day to prepare, and then we left on Thursday. The band members made the most of their rehearsal time. I think they were pretty excited to be part of the whole thing."

The band also made non-marching appearances, one in Baltimore's Harborplace outdoor amphitheater on Jan. 18 and one in Washington's Farragut Square on Jan. 19.



The Power and Class of New England marched more than 280 strong down Pennsylvania Avenue Jan. 20 in the inaugural parade for President George W. Bush. (Keith Paul photo)



U.S. Senator John Kerry addresses the crowd at the band's Farragut Square performance in Washington. (Keith Paul photo)



Alumni Relations (from left) typist Susanne Paquette, assistant director for Membership Rachel Koziol, Amy Bostock, a temporary employee in Marketing, and Janine Sicks, assistant director for Events and Programs fold, roll and box commemorative T-shirts for the band. (Stan Sherer photo)



Senior Chuck Sullivan carries cones into Boyden for the band's rehearsal. (Stan Sherer photo)



Twirlers (from left) freshman Kristen Roy, senior Meredith Kiernan, and freshman Christine Callahan rehearse their parade routines. (Stan Sherer photo)

Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry attended the Farragut Square performance. Members of the media and alumni groups, as well as passers by, also witnessed the performances, which included Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture" and Jerry Goldsmith's "The Wind and the Lion."

During the Baltimore performance, alumnus Richard Slingluff, '00, arranged to have the cannon from the USS Constellation, anchored nearby, fired at the appropriate moment during the "1812 Overture."

Although there was not a big turnout at Harborplace, Parks said the group was heard by members of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and "a lone veteran who stood in front of the band with tears streaming down his face" as they played Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA."

The night before the inauguration, Parks assembled the band members and told them they would "need to function like a machine" the following day.

"Understand that the minute you step out that door [of the bus], you're performing."

On the morning of the parade, the band had to make a 7 a.m. security check and then wait until nearly 3 p.m., the final two hours in a cold rain, before marching. The group timed its performance at the inauguration to ensure it played "God Bless the USA" as it approached President George W. Bush and his party. The band's color guard carried flags reminiscent of the US flag, having one white and two red curling stripes in the main body and a dark-blue inside upper corner with a lone white star. Associate director of Undergraduate Admissions David Hautanen, who is a visual ensemble instructor with the band, designed the flags and had them made for the parade. A video of this segment of the band's performance can be viewed online ([www.umassband.com/news/inaug\\_mmedia.html](http://www.umassband.com/news/inaug_mmedia.html)).

"There was good pre-trip coverage from Channel 5 in Boston and from our local stations showing the band rehearsing and more," said Susan Mattei, assistant vice chancellor for Alumni Relations. "The News Office sent hometown releases and issued a release with the band's itinerary. The News Office, the band, the Alumni Office, alumni leaders and the President's Office collaborated to contact many news outlets and follow up on leads that came in from Alumni Association board members and alumni club leaders.

"According to a combination of News Office, Alumni Office, and President's Office sources, media coverage included a Boston Globe item, stating the band 'did the state proud' with its concert in Farragut Square. The band was also featured on WBZ Radio, WRKO, WBUR, Channel 5, Channel 7 and Channel 6, Fox Channel 25 and the Herald in the Boston market. In addition, there was coverage in The Washington Post, DC's Channel 9, CNN, C-SPAN, NECN, and the 'Today Show.'"

"You could never put a price tag on this kind of positive publicity for the campus," said News Office director Barbara Pitoniak. "We're delighted that the band's participation in the inaugural parade generated so much interest across the state and even across the nation. We put out more than 250 hometown press releases for the band members. We got a lot of coverage in community newspapers and weekly publications, more so than any other hometown release that we've put out. We got so many calls about it."

Mattei estimated the cost of the trip to be a little over \$80,000. The President's Office, which also is buying the band new uniforms for the coming season, is providing \$40,000, close to half of the funding. The remaining cost will be covered by the Alumni Association, Athletics and gift funds from the campus.

Lasting memories of the experience will come from commemorative T-shirts provided to band members and the band alumni who supported the trip by the Alumni Association and a certificate of appreciation from U.S. Rep. John Olver, which was presented to the band by Olver's chief of staff, Hunter Ridgway, and will be entered by Olver in the Congressional Record on Jan. 30.