

## Her Chosen Horn



"Barge!" UD band director Heidi Sarver '86 '88G  
her mentor, UMass band director George Parks.

HEIDI SARVER WAS BORN HEADSTRONG: she admits somewhat ruefully, somewhat mischievously, that faced with such a spirited child her mother had to be "creative" to win cooperation. Determination in the face of doubt or resistance has taken Sarver far, however. Today she holds a position coveted in the marching band world, that of director of the "Fightin' Blue Hens" at the [University of Delaware](#).

Growing up in a musical family, Sarver tried several instruments before settling, in the fifth grade, on the trumpet. Why trumpet?

"Ego" she says matter-of-factly, "Solos, the melody line, being in the limelight appealed to me" The trumpet is sometimes thought of as a "masculine instrument," she adds, and "guys gave me lots of grief " In spite of, or because of, the grief, Sarver kept on blowing her chosen horn, becoming first chair in her high school's orchestra

In college, some music faculty members advised her not to march in the UMass band. (It was considered "non musical activity. ," says Sarver.) She responded predictably: she played right through graduate school. In fact, she recalls, "I did them all" - "them" being the wind, jazz, and brass ensembles, the orchestra, and the symphony as well as marching band, and finished her last semester on campus with a 4.0.

As for being a band director - an ambition she formed in the ninth grade - not everyone understood that. "You want to be a *what* ?" Sarver mimics. Nonetheless, two weeks after graduation she had her first job, as a high school band director

It was Minuteman band director **George Parks**, says Sarver, who helped her keep her drive from always going into overdrive. "He taught me that it's important that passion for what I believe in, but also how to be positive, to see things from other peoples perspective. You can't barge full-steam onto the field without anyone behind you"

Parks had recruited Sarver to UMass after working with her in her high school drum corps. Fifteen years later she is still a full-blown fan, as well as a friend and colleague. Summers, she works for Parks giving drum-major workshops. She also choreographs some of the UMass half-time "drills." (She estimates each takes about sixty to seventy hours to create - working, as much as possible, straight through.) For Homecoming last fall, Sarver left Delaware after work Friday, drove to Amherst, arrived at midnight, and was rehearsing a halftime program with fellow Alumni Band members at eight o'clock Saturday morning (The program had special meaning for all involved this year, because Parks is celebrating his twentieth anniversary at UMass, and band alumni returned from as far away as California.) Afterwards, Sarver drove to Allentown, Pennsylvania, to be with her charges for a college band festival on Sunday.

In October, when Sarver brought her Blue Hens to play at halftime during the UMass/Delaware game she was formally inducted into the Minuteman Band Hall of Fame. Has the dogged determination paid off? Says Sarver, "I am exactly where I want to be" In her three years at Delaware, she's built the band from 104 members to 240- with the help, incidentally of fellow Umie **Jim Ancona '92**, the band's percussionist. Having been hired to develop the band, perhaps it's not surprising that she has had the support of administration and students. But Sarver is still very grateful .

"At Delaware:" she says fervently, "a football game is not just a game, it's a full day. Tailgating starts the night before, and the crowd does not leave the stands at halftime. They stay to watch the band, just like at UMass They go nuts! They appreciate any band, they love a great band "

It all comes down to "being paid to have fun," she concludes. "I love the music, the pageantry, the sweat and grind of putting a show together. And having the band succeed - it's the thrill of my life "