

It was two days before Christmas



(Photos by Keith Paul)

It was two days before Christmas when the invitation to participate in the 2001 Inaugural Parade reached Minuteman Band director George Parks.

This is an honor hoped for every four years but rarely received. The UMass band last marched in the inaugural parade in 1981, and performed at inauguration ceremonies in 1985. What probably cinched the invitation this year was winning the 1998 Sudler Trophy, the most coveted prize in the world of college bands.

School was not in session. Many members were home on break. No matter. Within days the band was practicing on the artificial turf of Garber Field east of Boyden Gym. Less than 30 days later they were marching up Pennsylvania Avenue along with 37 other bands from across the country in celebration of the inauguration of President George W. Bush.

Nearly every member of the band made it to the parade. Six buses transported the 300 musicians to Washington, where to the wonderment of our intern, euphonium player Cheryl Christopher '03, they even got to sleep in hotels. (Band travel usually means gym floors.) They were featured on TV broadcasts, including *The Today Show*, and met celebrities Kelsey Grammer, Drew Carey, and Rick Schroeder.

Heady stuff, not to mention the main event. "I'm especially pleased for our students," said Parks. "They will remember this event forever."

