

## RESEARCH IN THE FIELD

Research, accuracy, and emphasis on bringing events to life for students have been tenets of the preparation of the Why America Is Free Curriculum. For example, before writing *Battle Road* (the dramatic audio production about Lexington and Concord), we asked for and were given permission to accompany the Sudbury Ancient Fife and Drum Company during their part of the annual reenactment of the events—a muster and march of many miles from Sudbury to the North Bridge in Concord and then on to Lexington and beyond. Our purpose was to film and photograph the event certainly, but it was also to get a feel for the terrain, weather, and distances covered by the militiamen on April 19, 1775. Historic accuracy has been of paramount importance to the Sudbury reenactors, and only because they saw the importance of what we were doing, they permitted us, the first and last women ever, to join in.

Their permission was gracious but conditional: IF we were in full costume; IF we could keep up on foot without impeding anyone; IF we hid our equipment whenever not actively filming and photographing. We were told to expect a fast march of about 9-12 very hilly miles in cold weather.

So we had heavy clothing and voluminous cloaks made, and bought the appropriate thick stockings and period work shoes. We sought out whatever rough and hilly terrain we could find in Houston (it turned out that the off-limits bike paths near the bayou in Memorial Park were the most challenging and at times harrowing), and trained hard for months. We were determined that we would not embarrass the men who gave us the opportunity or ourselves.

In the wee hours of the appointed morning, we each dressed in our 12 pounds of clothing, tucked our equipment under cloaks, and joined the muster on the grounds of an old Sudbury church. In the near freezing pre-dawn, the men quietly assembled. None but they and we were there. At the appointed hour, silhouetted against the barely lightening sky, they listened as the invocation was given over the flagged graves of Patriots. Then the drummers beat cadence. The order to march sounded. The fifes struck their first notes. And the march began.



The experience was extraordinary, and one we both will always treasure. The music and cadence were so energizing that even though the route was far hillier than the worst Houston had to offer, the miles quickly unspooled behind us. The men were fully invested in what they were doing, enjoying themselves yet not conversing, completely self-disciplined. As the route wound through the countryside

we passed many homes. Standing on the front steps of most, quietly and happily respectful people of all ages in nightclothes and coats held American flags as the militia marched by. We were able to get in front of the columns occasionally, allowing us to capture images of the men as they marched towards us, but for much of the time we simply exulted in the experience of the march.



We were privileged to be included in the columns of New Englanders honoring the bravery and resolve of their ancestors, the villagers and farmers who fired the shot heard 'round the world.



Participating was not just a memory maker for us. Combined with the extensive research that preceded it, it helped us breathe life into the events on the *Battle Road* audio production and in the many integrated lesson plans in the Curriculum, and the images from that day have been used in a number of ways.

