

TAKEOFFS AND LANDINGS

A Holiday Traffic Jam

By **CHRISTINE B. WHELAN**
Special to **THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**
November 19, 2004; Page W8

This year, New York's Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade has some stiff competition from cities nationwide.

America's Thanksgiving Parade in Detroit will have 29 floats this year, compared to 23 in New York. "They just have a lot more stars, but I think we're up there," says Jennifer Wells, spokeswoman for the Parade Company, which organizes Detroit's parade and has raised more than \$3 million for this year's event. Some of the new floats: "Let Freedom Ring," sponsored by General Motors Corp., which can be disassembled and taken on the road, and a 112-foot fairy-tale boat, the longest float ever built by the parade.

In Houston, the Washington Mutual Thanksgiving Day Parade plans to draw 400,000 viewers curbside for a culturally diverse celebration featuring Chinese, Indian and Hispanic groups. Tony-award winner Jennifer Holliday will ride atop the "Believe in Yourself" float of fairy-tale characters, and more than 350 cheerleaders will perform a group routine.

The 6ABC/Boscov's Thanksgiving Day Parade in Philadelphia is celebrating its 85th anniversary and the honor of being the oldest parade nationwide. TV viewers will see videos from parades past interspersed with live performances by a troupe of 700 tap dancers, and floats carrying Miss America Deidre Downs and TV personality Kelly Ripa.

Not to be outdone, in New York, the 78th Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade will unveil its first-ever square balloon, SpongeBob SquarePants, held together by more than 600 internal lines, along with a wobbly Weebles float that uses new cold-air balloon technology -- it lets them wobble without falling.