



### **From John Melvin . . . . .**

(Col. Melvin was awarded the Navy Cross  
for extraordinary heroism, as well as the Purple Heart  
for actions in the Korean War)

In late 1945 and during the first half of 1946 the Marine Corps experienced a drastic reduction of personnel, both officer and enlisted. This, of course, was the result of WWII ending. The Marine Barracks, 8th and I, was not immune to this situation.

Camp David was then known as Shangri La, a name given to it during the Roosevelt Administration. FDR used it a great deal, but President Truman did not. We heard that this was because Mrs. Truman did not care for its remoteness, although that was purely rumor. In any event, at that time, its security was provided by a permanent unit from 8th and I. The CO was the Executive Officer of the Marine Barracks, Major William Dickinson. As I recall, the t/o called for three officers and ninety enlisted on board at the Camp reporting to Major Dickinson back at the MB in D.C.

With the exodus of reserve officers to inactive duty, the summer of 1946 found the Shangri La without a single officer; therefore, I was transferred to the Camp from the Barracks to fill the duties of three officers! I was the senior rank on station, as well as being assigned the duties of the Mess Officer, the Special Services Officer, and a few others I can't remember. It was a busy time, but the compensations were great; particularly for a young second lieutenant of the age of 21. I had my own jeep, the food was good, and the accommodations were fabulous! My quarters were huge, with a large bed, and my own private bath.

As you can imagine, the primary duty was (and, in all probability, still is) the security of the Camp. To that end, we had the last contingent of War Dogs to assist us in providing that security. They had all seen service in WWII, most of them in the Pacific. They were a collection of German Police Dogs and Dobermans and we used them to patrol the

perimeter of the installation. If I had been an enemy invader I would have thought twice about trying to secretly get through our lines. They were a ferocious appearing bunch, although their handlers said they were quite docile around our Marines. I've often wondered if those dogs were replaced by a new generation of watch dogs. In my mind, those old veterans of WWII were irreplaceable.

My duty at Shangri La (Camp David) was all too brief. Since I was no longer going overseas as a Diplomatic Courier, I was therefore in the pipeline to go overseas — I never could figure out that logic — so after about a month I received orders to the 1stMarDiv in Tientsin, China. I left Shangri La (and the Marine Barracks) with many fond memories.

#### **From Bill Petit . . . . .**

I remember going to Camp David on several occasions as a cook during 1954-56. Sixty company men, and one cook whenever President Eisenhower was there. We had old black stoves to cook on and we worked with Army, Navy and I believe Coast Guard cooks to feed the troops, which included Secret Service men who bunked in the same area as we did. Had to give up weekends off yto go up there but the experience was well worth it.

#### **From Gene Smallwood . . . . .**

If memory serves me right, I do believe the gate house and cabin in these pictures were in place in 1955. We (12) would use USMC busses to travel up to and back from Camp David.

When the President was expected to arrive (by limo in those days), we would drop off two members to stand guard under the bridges on the way up the mountain ( I think there were three bridges going up the mountain to the gate house). When the President's caravan would pass over the bridges someone would drive back down the mountain to pick up the two man teams that were, to keeping marauders from attacking the bridge. With M1s and no ammo, Radio with dead batteries, We stood guard duty.

There were no bridge incidents during the three or four times I was on the Guarding Camp David detail in 1955. I take that back there was one incident that I heard of. That of a reported pissing contest off the top of the bridge as the caravan rolled around the corner. Our orders were to stay under the bridge out of site until relieved of duty.

Knowing that the Marines that were stationed at the Barracks in 1955 on the Drill Team were so well disciplined, they would never leave their post under the bridge to take a piss off the bridge. So I do believe that this incident /sea story belongs to the members of the 56, 57, and 58 drill teams.

**From Bob Turner . . . . .**

Thanks for presenting the Camp David account by Gene Smallwood. This story is true as I was the other guy presenting arms to the President as the entourage passed. I had mentioned that the Secret Service drove very fast and he had to hurry.

The other Marine with me was peeing over the bridge and could not stop as I hollered "here they come!" The tears were streaming down my cheeks from laughing so hard and I thought sure we were going to jail when we got back. But nothing was said. I still don't remember the other fellows name.

You could say that we were presenting arms, his was short arms and I used a rifle. We both were on the Drill Team in 1955.

**From Lee Miles . . . . .**

When we first went up to Camp David 1957, no Marines had been there for a long time. We (the 2nd platoon) raked up the perimeter and killed a whole lot of copperhead snakes. We slept in CCC huts built in the 1930's, with four men to a hut with a gas stove in the middle. For want of a better word, one could say it was "quaint."

I believe Fred Kirven has some pictures of us outside of the huts, coming into the Mess Hall after 4 to 8 guard duty. David Eisenhower was in the Mess Hall and he must have been all of 10 years old, and he was impressed meeting Marines and we took him in. He wanted to see what all we had on and I let him try my helmet on. It was too heavy for him as he was a little guy so he didn't have it on very long.

There were a lot of things going on, too numerous to say in an E-mail. Just plain old good memories and that is why Colonel Melvin's memories jogged my memories.