

8th & I Duty Assignments at the White House

Almost from 8th & I's beginning, the Marine Band received regular assignments to play for social functions and affairs of state at the White House. Similar assignments for other 8th & I Marines has been difficult to trace, at least until the mid-1950's.

8th & I Marine officers served as White House social aides and at some point in time Barracks Marines were assigned to Color Guard duty.

White House Color Guard Duty

Bob Capeci (Plt. Sgt. Of the 4th Plt. Drill Team), reports:

In early 1957, I and another 8th & I Marine (a Sergeant, but I forget who) were told to report to the Naval Aide to the President at the White House. Once there, we found two members from each of the Army, Navy and Air Force (all ceremonial types).

The Aide said we were to be the Presidential Color Guard, and protocol directed that the senior Marine be in charge. There were no riflemen, only color bearers for the National and Presidential colors. We referred to the unit as the White House Color Guard.

At official White House functions, I and one of the other servicemen positioned ourselves just outside the President's living quarters upstairs with the colors. On cue the color guard, followed by the President and the First Lady, proceeded down the steps to the lower level where the guests were assembled. The Marine Band played the appropriate music.

The Presidential party entered one of the rooms where they would receive a reception line. I and the other Serviceman posted the National and Presidential colors just outside the room on each side of the doorway. Our orders were to stand at rigid attention to include fixed eyeballs. The individual color bearers were ceremonially replaced every 30 minutes. The reception line was quite long.

Upon completion of the reception line, the Presidential party moved to a large ballroom and the color bearers were placed inside the room at the door. At this time the Marine Band played subdued music and the dancing commenced. About 2200 the President and First lady excused themselves and adjourned to their quarters. Then the Marine Band switched to jazz and big band music and the proceedings became much more informal. The Color Guard was relieved soon after.

I never knew who, if anyone, was in the previous year's color guard, nor who replaced me in early 1958. I often went to the White House to participate in the

rehearsals for these occasions, and never saw any other Marines in any category.



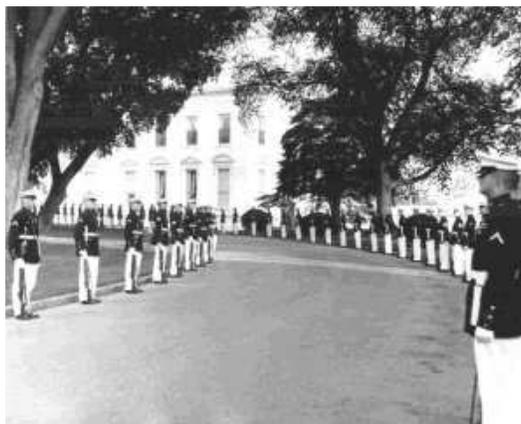
(Joe Larkin holding the Presidential Colors)

Joe Larkin (Plt. Sgt, 1st Plt. Drill Team, 1958) responded:

The combined Service Presidential Color Guard." During 58/59 SSgt Glenn Tait and I were selected by Major Larry Marousek, (C O of H&S Co,) whose title I believe was "Marine Aide to the Presidential Naval Aide" to carry Ike's color at social functions. Since Ike liked to party, this happened several times a month. Glenn would take one detail and I would take the next. There is a picture on our web site showing me holding his colors, which was taken (I believe) in 1958

Like you, I never saw any other Marines at the White House.

White House Miscellaneous Ceremonies



Awaiting the arrival of the Shah of Iran

8th & I Marines have participated in a variety of ceremonies at the White House. These include joint service honor guards for arrival of dignitaries on the south lawn of the White

House (in the 1950's, the arrivals were at the front door of the White House following a Parade on Pennsylvania Avenue), a performance of a full "evening parade," as well as other miscellaneous duties. These include the "death watch" for President Kennedy after his return from the assassination in Dallas



awaiting the 2 am arrival of the JFK ambulance at the White House



JFK Death Watch in the White House

Assignment as White House Door "Greeters"

In February of 1969, President Richard M. Nixon conducted a European tour which included visits to the various U.S. Embassies there.

Don Myers (Barrack CO 1985-98) reports that:

The White House duty for a Marine at the door started after President Nixon returned from his overseas trip and commented that he had seen Marines at the doors of every embassy, and questioned why there were none at the White House. We started immediately. In fact he kept a log of who entered the White House and that never came up when Nixon got into trouble about Watergate.

Pete Heiss has a specific recollection:

As a former NCOIC of the White House Reception NCO's,(1970) the enlisted detail started with SSgt Terry Strausburg as the first NCOIC of a four man team during late 1969. If I am not mistaken, Strausburg came from the Color Guard Section or the Silent Drill Team. I came out of the Silent Drill Team. There was one other NCOIC before me and I recommended to 1stLt Peter Pace, that Sgt Gary Kober (Body Bearers) replace me as the NCOIC and he did. We were stationed at the barracks in the Navy Yard and we were transported to the White House daily. Our job was to greet Presidents Nixon's appointments as we stood outside the door at the West Port. We did not carry any weapons and we did not log who came and went (the President's Secretary kept the diary). We were authorized to wear the Presidential Service Badge (PSB) while we were there. After one year of Presidential Service, we were awarded the PSB and it became a permanent part of our uniform. One of the nice benefits was that when the President was out of town, we were on liberty but subject to instant recall.



Jim Donovan (CGC, 1957-59 / H & S Co., 1967-68) adds:

Marines were assigned to man the President's access door to the White House from the rose garden at the request of President Richard Nixon during his administration. I was on my second tour at the barracks as the personnel officer at that time. Unfortunately, I cannot remember the exact date it began.