

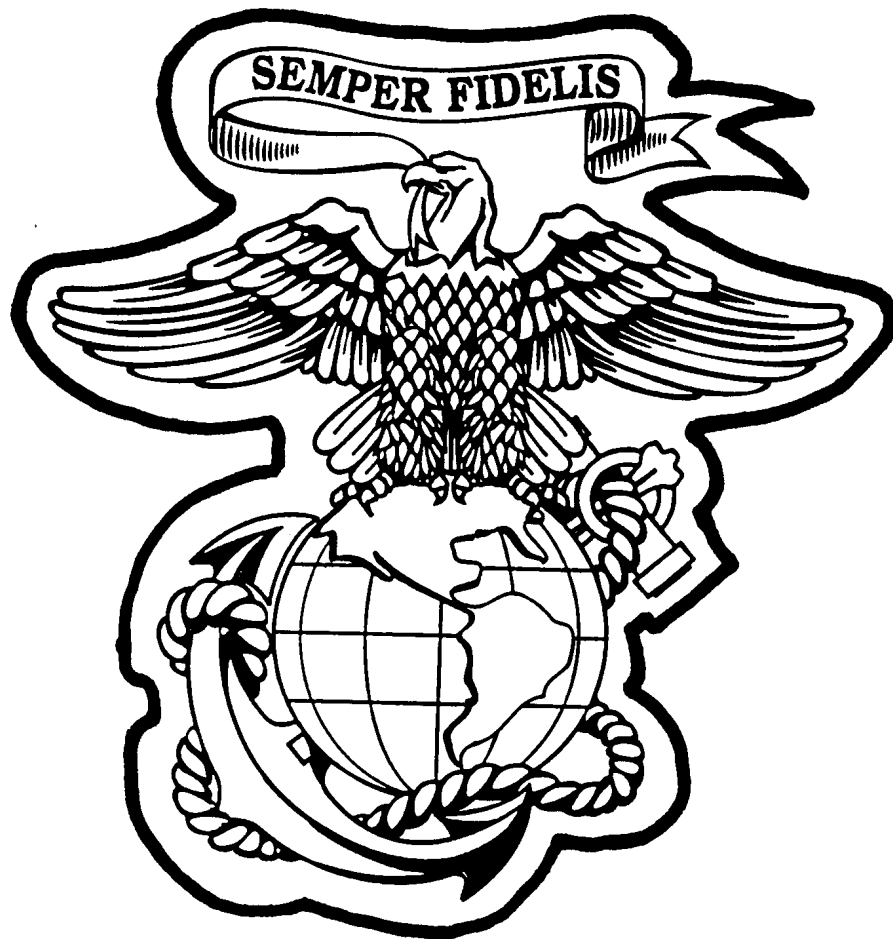
# *"Ceremonial Adventures"*

Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C.

1955 - 1959

## One Marine's Story

*An Autobiography*



By

R.R. "Ron" Burton

Captain, U.S. Marines (Retired)

**"LEATHERNECK" A long-standing nickname for U.S. Marines, which goes back to the leather stock, or neckpiece, that was part of the uniform from 1775 to 1875. The most commonly accepted reason for its use was to protect the neck from saber or knife slashes when boarding enemy warships. The high collar on Marine Dress Blues is a sign of a modern "Leatherneck."**

**This autobiography is dedicated to my loving wife,  
Jean and our wonderful children, Jeffrey, Brett,  
Eric and Julie. My life after the Marine Corps  
would've been empty without them.**

**It is hoped that my children will share this story  
with their children, my grandchildren.**

## **THE SELECTION TEAM FROM MARINE BARRACKS. WASHINGTON, D.C.**

### **CAMP LEJEUNE, NC . . . . SUMMER 1955**

As the weather grew warmer and the tempo of field training exercises intensified, I continued my growth as a sergeant. There was much more to being a Marine NCO than I could have ever imagined. The leadership aspects were the most difficult to master. I had always assumed that when you gave an order, everyone immediately set about complying in an enthusiastic manner that's the way I had always been. Boy! Did I have much to learn. I made progress and soon learned the "Golden Rule" of leadership "If you take care of the troops, the troops will take care of you!" Naturally, as with most young men, you had to remain constantly vigilant . . . always expect the unexpected. I loved the games we played and soon became a proficient player, a good NCO. As I honed my infantry skills, rumors of our deployment to the Mediterranean, as the "Float Battalion," began to circulate. It sounded exciting and we all began to look forward to something besides Camp Lejeune. However, the opportunity of a lifetime would intercede . . . no "Med" for me!

During late summer, we were informed that representatives from the Marine Barracks, at Eighth & Eye Street in Washington, DC, would be selecting sergeants and others for service at the barracks. I informed the company first sergeant that I was interested in applying for this duty. He approved and at the appointed time, I reported to the Division Parade Deck for an interview. First Lieutenant Foster and Staff Sergeant Coffin, from the Marine Barracks, greeted us and explained the duties we would be performing, if we were selected! We would be assigned to Barracks Detachment and would eventually be involved with the USMC Silent Drill Team. Duties would include guarding the President at Camp David, funeral duty in Arlington National Cemetery and a wide variety of ceremonies around the Washington, DC area. These ceremonies would include an inaugural parade; sunset parades at the barracks and afternoon parades at the Marine Corps' War Memorial, more commonly known as the "Iwo Jima Monument."

It sounded exciting and I worked hard at being one of the four sergeants selected out of approximately 250 applicants. About half of the applicants were dismissed for being too short or too heavy. They only selected people between 6' and 6'4" with a slender build. Final selection was based on military appearance and ability to conduct and perform close order drill. After two days of drill and several personal one-on-one interviews, I was informed that I was one of the four sergeants selected. Sergeants Capeci, Keller and Williamson would be the other three selectees. We would be receiving orders very soon.

As I prepared to leave Camp Lejeune, I couldn't help but remember an exceptional Marine, a professional private and my mentor. If only I could remember

his name, I would feel so much more worthy of the gifts his experience gave me. He was there at a time when my career could've gone either way. Much of what I became, I owe to his sound advice and gentle assistance. He taught me about positive vs. negative leadership and the importance of knowing the men, the Marines, for whom you are responsible. He offered his help when I was struggling to conduct close order drill. Without arrogance, he guided my development as an NCO, which made me a better Staff NCO and eventually a better Officer. His advice would serve me well at the Marine Barracks. I thought of him often over the years and take this opportunity to salute his memory.

As promised, orders assigning me to the Marine Barracks in Washington, D.C. arrived in early November 1955. My days with Charlie company, 6th Marines came to an end. It had been a wonderful experience and I found the "Real Marine Corps," the grunts, everything I hoped it would be. I left Camp Lejeune a far better Marine NCO than when I arrived, but at \$1500 a year , I left the same way I had arrived . . . on a Greyhound bus!

## **BARRACKS DETACHMENT**

### **MARINE BARRACKS, WASHINGTON, D.C. . . . NOVEMBER 1955**

The trip by Greyhound Bus, from Camp Lejeune, NC to Washington, DC, was totally uneventful. In fact, I have no recollection whatever of this bus ride. However , arrival in the Greyhound Bus Depot was a real experience. I retrieved my seabag from the compartment under the bus, and decided to freshen up before looking for a ride to the Marine Barracks. Before I reached the restrooms, I had been approached by several gay men wanting to give me a ride. They were all so obvious that it was easy to identify them and avoid any contact. A few were very pushy and at one point I had to get a little physical. Welcome, to our nation's capitol! I spotted a diner and decided to get a sandwich. I sat at the counter and ordered. A well dressed man, sitting two or three stools away, opened a conversation. He expressed sympathy with me over the boldness of the gay men who had approached me. He indicated that he had observed what was going on and was about to call the police. I thanked him for his concern and expressed my disappointment with Washington. He agreed with me and as the conversation turned to sports, he moved to the stool next to mine. After telling him I was from Pittsburgh, his focus was immediately on the PIRATES and the STEELERS. He was very personable and conversation was easy. When he offered to pay for my sandwich and give me a ride to the Barracks, I thanked him and, being totally naive, I followed him to his car. No sooner had we left the parking lot and he began talking about spending the night at his place and going to the Barracks in the morning. I may have been naive, but not stupid! Warning signals were flashing in my mind and I graciously declined his invitation. As we proceeded toward the Barracks, at least I think that's where we were headed, he reached over and placed his hand on my thigh.

I felt very foolish for having allowed myself to be put in this position, and with rising anger I said, "Remove the hand, or lose it, asshole!" He didn't react fast enough and I physically removed the hand from my leg. My stomach was in knots, but I tried to act confident and in control. "Pull over to the curb and let me out," I demanded. He pulled to the curb and stopped the car. As I retrieved my seabag from the backseat, he apologized and tried to make me feel sorry for him. I was not impressed and thanked him for the sandwich and the ride. I turned away and began walking quickly toward what appeared to be a busy, well lit intersection. This was a very upsetting encounter with a gay man and it left me a little shaken, however, it would not be my last. Washington, DC seemed to have more than it's share of gays and they liked to hang out in the bars frequented by the Marines from the Barracks. At times they reminded me of sharks in a "feeding frenzy!" So much for my first few hours in Washington, DC. The safety of the Barracks was my next step and I hailed a taxi.

The cab driver knew exactly where to go and we quickly arrived in front of the main entrance to the Marine Barracks. It was really impressive! The gate was only about 10 feet from the sidewalk on 8<sup>th</sup> Street. The sentry stood at parade rest, body straight, feet placed at shoulder width and hands clasped at the small of his back. He stood in the doorway of a small, yellow brick building on the left side of the one-lane driveway entering the barracks compound. Even the door knob and the hinges on the door were highly polished brass. It was dark outside but the gate area was well lighted. The sentry was tall and dressed in an immaculate blue uniform which consisted of a navy blue, hip-length blouse (coat), sky blue trousers with a scarlet red stripe down the leg, a white pistol belt and white gloves. He stood behind a polished brass rail and his shoes, cap visor and holster were so shiny that I thought they might not be leather, but some type of plastic. I would soon learn how they got to be that shiny. lots and lots of elbow grease! The creases in his blues were so sharp they looked like they could cut.

Every movement was precise and executed in such a way as to make a sound. It seemed as though every time he moved, something popped, snapped or clicked. I was certainly impressed as I handed him my orders directing me to report for duty. Quickly checking them, he directed me to the Guard House where I would report to the Officer of the Day or the Sergeant of the Guard. Everyone and everything was an example of "spit-and-polish," of military precision. After reporting in, a young Private was assigned to escort me to the Sergeant's Quarters located in the center garret. He ensured that I had a bunk and fresh linen. On the way, he showed me where the Ceremonial Guard Company office was located and suggested that I avoid the Company GySgt, GySgt Bunce, as long as possible. GySgt Bunce was one of those unforgettable characters the Marine Corps is so fond of cultivating. He and I would meet the following morning .

The other sergeant's living in the center garret were friendly and they invited

me to have breakfast with them. The barrack's messhall was small, but spotlessly clean and to my amazement, served all meals "family style." Large platters and bowls of food were placed on each table and you ate as much as you wanted. Messmen refilled dishes, bowls and pitchers and responded to your needs. So far, things were looking pretty good. After breakfast, I returned to the garret and squared away my gear and bunk. I checked myself in the mirror and was pleased with the image I presented. I must admit to a little apprehension as I proceeded to the Company admin office to check-in for duty. Ceremonial Guard Company (BksDet) is one of the most prestigious duty assignments in the Marine Corps, rivaled only by assignment to "Embassy Duty" with the State Department.

Upon reporting to the office, I was immediately ushered in to meet 1stSgt Alsop, the Company 1stSgt. He was an affable person and warmly welcomed me aboard. After a brief wait, he took me in to meet the Company Commander. The CO was a very tall, very impressive, Captain Robert Burhans. He welcomed me aboard and briefly explained the many and varied duties performed by the Marines of Ceremonial Guard Co (BksDet). He instructed the 1stSgt to have me report to GySgt Bunce and get started on my processing into the company. I was assigned as the Platoon Guide for the 2nd Platoon. The Platoon Commander was 1stLt Foster and the Platoon Sergeant was SSgt Coffin. I had met both of them at Camp Lejeune during the selection process.

I asked how to find GySgt Bunce and was directed to his room down the passage-way. I knocked on his door and was told to enter . . . quietly! I opened the door and stepped inside. I was not prepared for the scene before me. The room was long and narrow, which dictated the desk along a side wall. I was looking at the right side of the desk and the Gunny was sitting in a swivel chair. He pushed the chair back and turned facing me. He rose and walked toward me with his right hand extended to shake hands. He was wearing an old khaki shirt with the sleeves cut off just below the chevrons. The cut was ragged and small threads hung down. In the Corps these threads are known as "Irish Pennants." A no, no of major proportions. He wasn't wearing trousers, only white skivvies (boxer shorts), but he had on black dress socks held up by old-fashioned garters, that fit over the top of the calf and hooked to the socks. His footwear was bedroom slippers. I would soon learn that relaxing like this between ceremonies was common, but it took me by surprise. He was a big man with a very close haircut, even by Marine standards. A scar ran down the side of his face and gave him the look of a Prussian officer who had been slashed, while dueling with a saber. His room was full of Marine memorabilia, reflecting the history of the Corps and his service in the Pacific during World War II and the Korean War. He talked and acted like a Gunnery Sergeant. He complimented my appearance and indicated it would get better in the months ahead. He told me to have my dress shoes made "ceremonial." This meant having an additional sole put on and a large horseshoe shaped cleat on the heel. Three smaller cleats would be placed at the toe and outer edges of the sole. When you brought your heels together . . . CLICK!

Until now, every place I had been stationed was a large base. The Marine Barracks at 8th and "I" Street, SE, is simply referred to as "EIGHTH and EYE." It is a quadrangle occupying one city block in the middle of Southeast Washington, with the buildings enclosing a parade field. The backside of the brick buildings are at the outer edge of the compound and the front facade faces in toward the manicured grass parade field. On the north side was "G" Street and the Marine Corps' Commandant's (CMC) home. The home and its large, beautiful walled gardens completely fill in the space between 8th and 9th Streets. To the east we have the barracks offices and troop billeting spaces, known as "squadbays." This two and three story brick structure, with a castle-like garret in the center, enclosed the compound along 9th street. Troop squadbays occupied the top floors and administration offices were located on the first floor. Supply and maintenance could be found in the basement. A covered arcade, next to the parade field, went from one end of this building to the other and then turned west across the front of the band hall, ending as a large covered porch facing north. All doors into this building opened onto the arcade. The band hall, home of the "MARINE BAND," known as the "PRESIDENT'S OWN," had its place along "I" Street on the south side. Below the band hall were maintenance shops, instrument repair shops and a favorite of the troops. the " 1630 Club!" This was the enlisted club and derived its name from when it opened for business. 4:30 PM (1630). Above the band hall was a small gym, which saw more rifle tosses than basket shooting. To complete the square there were five, two story brick homes along 8th Street. These buildings were connected with a brick wall topped by a spiked, wrought iron fence. The one closest to the CMC's house was reserved for the Ass't CMC. Next in line was the quarters used by the Commanding Officer of the Barracks, a Colonel. The next two homes were used by various general officers, as directed by the Commandant. The last house was the BOQ, called "Center House." The bachelor officers resided in Center House, which had an ornate dining room and bar. Each of these houses had a large screened porch facing the parade field. In front of the porch was a tree lined sidewalk, which stretched from the Commandant's house to the driveway in front of the band hall. The barracks quadrangle was completed with the main gate or entrance to the compound. On either side of the driveway was a ten foot high brick pillar, with a large lighted globe on top. Each pillar supported one half of the large wrought iron gate that swung inboard and was adorned with a Marine Corps Seal. A brick wall topped with a wrought iron, spiked fence connected the band hall porch with the right pillar. A matching wall and spiked fence connected the left pillar with Center House. A decorative wall on each side proclaimed, "**MARINE BARRACKS . . . Established 1801**" This unique and colorful military community would be my home from November 1955 until May 1959. Three years of duty and a lifetime of memories. Most of them are wonderful, a few sad . . . but . . . all memories!

On a historical note, the Commandant's House at Eighth and Eye has served as the home of every Commandant since 1805. The land for the barracks was acquired in 1801 for the outrageous sum of \$6,247.18, or 4 cents a square foot. The CMC's home is



the oldest government building in continuous use in Washington. In 1814, the British burned most of the government buildings including the Capitol and the White House but, they spared the Commandant's house and the Marine Barracks. According to legend, the Marine buildings were spared as a gesture of respect for the Marine's resolute stand at Bladensburg, MD. They were the only troops to offer serious resistance to the British as they advanced on Washington. To this day, there exists a close bond between the Marines of the United States and the Royal Marines of Great Britain. Another interesting note is the fact that Marines from Eighth and Eye captured John Brown, the Abolitionist, who was holding hostages in the Federal Arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, in 1859. At the beginning of the Civil War, Eighth and Eye Marines would participate in the first Battle of Manassas, more commonly known as Bull Run. Their performance wasn't noteworthy, but they were among the last Federal Troops to run from the battlefield.

The civilian community surrounding the barracks was diverse. 8th Street was predominately businesses. As you would expect, bars, uniform shops, dry cleaners, tailors, cobblers and a few eating places, were the most common businesses to be found. Single family homes lined most of "G" Street and 9th Street. The area was terribly run down and predominately black. In 1955, everyone at the barracks was white. There were isolated problems, but for the most part we co-existed peacefully. On the "I" Street side, there was a city park and playground. When the parade deck at the barracks was wet or freshly seeded, we would chase the kids out of the park and use it for drill practice or rehearsals. The kids didn't like it, but we were bigger and had rifles with fixed bayonets.

### **BARRACKS DETACHMENT / CEREMONIAL GUARD COMPANY**

Barracks Detachment was comprised of a HQ section and three ceremonial platoons. Until the parade season of 1959, each platoon was trained as a Silent Drill Platoon and would alternate at the evening parades and other drill details. In 1957, a fourth platoon was added to improve security at Camp David, the Presidential Retreat about 80 miles from Washington. President Eisenhower frequently used Camp David or his farm in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. At this time, the unit designation was changed from Barracks Detachment to Ceremonial Guard Company. The duties remained the same, with the exception of spending more time at Camp David. Each platoon remained a Silent Drill Team and would be required to perform any function assigned to it. Rather than switch back and forth between unit designations, I will simply use Ceremonial Guard Company as the unit.

When not guarding the President, our days were filled with funerals at Arlington National Cemetery, Evening Parades at the Barracks or the Iwo Jima Memorial, various ceremonial functions around Washington and many Honor Guards for visiting dignitaries. Many of these details came with less than 24 hours notice and

therefore, several hours of uniform preparation was required each evening before liberty! Uniform coats, trousers and shirts had to be pressed; shoes, cap visors and holsters had to be spit-shined to a very high gloss. Brass buckles, buttons and medals had to be shined nightly to prevent tarnishing in the damp winter air or the humid summers. Between spit-shining leather and polishing brass, we felt certain that the lines on our fingertips were being erased. we would have no fingerprints! Rifle stocks were rubbed with linseed oil until they reflected your image and your palm felt friction burned. A supply of clean white belts, gloves and cap covers had to be available at all times. As an NCO, I had the added job of shining the brass on my sword and it's accessories. Experimentation with new methods of shining equipment were always being tried. In time, we found that glass wax worked best on our brass. There were as many ways of wrapping a shining cloth around your fingertip, as there were individuals. Everyone had a special method, or mixture, or procedure, but they all produced leather and brass that could be used as a mirror. With little or no warning, you had to be ready to fall out in anyone of the many Marine Corps' uniforms and appropriate accessories or equipment. The new Marines were immediately issued blues, overcoats and extra shoes. The platoons began preparing for basic details such as funerals and honor guards. When not otherwise occupied, the fundamentals of the silent drill were taught. Repetition . . . Repetition . . . Repetition! The hours spent at close order drill were beginning to show results, but it was January 1956 and our first parade season started in May. There didn't seem to be enough days left to accomplish all that had to be done. As winter gave way to spring, the parade field was freshly seeded and the neighborhood children saw little of their playground. One day in early spring, I was summoned to GySgt Bunce's office. He told me he had a "Special Naval Assignment" for my platoon. He referred to this special assignment as the "MAN-U-RAY DETAIL." I soon learned that it consisted of spreading fresh, odorous manure on the recently seeded parade field. It was a long day and the smell of manure lingered even after a long, hot shower.

### **THE COMMANDANT RETIRES**

The Commandant, General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr. retired after 38 years of service. He was CMC when I enlisted and had been the only Commandant I had known. A graduate of the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), he had served as a lieutenant during the battle of Belleau Wood in 1917. His retirement would be the first major parade detail for my platoon. It was January 1956 and the day dawned cold and gray. The commands were crisp and clear . . . the response, a loud SNAP! I felt a sense of loss as this very distinguished, white haired gentleman "trooped-the-line" for the last time. As General Shepherd proceeded down the line of Marines, he would stop occasionally and exchange pleasantries with individuals he recognized. As the temperature dropped and snow flurries swirled about the compound, I wondered if I would ever know a general officer well enough for him to stop and talk to me? Eventually, I realized that you usually knew them while they were junior officers, long

before they became generals. A mystery solved.

### **MASTERING THE SILENT DRILL**

The 1956 parade season was fast approaching and preparations were moving at a rapid pace. Every minute that could be found between ceremonies and funerals was spent learning and perfecting the platoon's silent drill. We constantly competed with the neighborhood kids for use of the playground. The rifle tosses were learned in the gym. A double layer of mats would be put down and rifles, with fixed bayonets would fly through the air. Thumbs and fingers were stubbed and bruises appeared. Several stocks were splintered on impact, when someone missed a catch or simply jumped out of the way. I didn't envy SSgt Coffin as he attempted to teach us the silent drill. He was persistent and the constant repetition began to pay off. About the time I figured we were a hopeless cause, a small light appeared at the end of the tunnel. Out of utter chaos came order! Each day brought more improvement and added another movement to the drill. In the end, there would be ten minutes of precision drill executed entirely without verbal commands. The silent drill was a very well choreographed routine, which required each member to maintain a count in his head. A count might go like this: "Heels together . . . face right . . . tap and tap . . . port arms and step . . . one and two and three and halt . . . toss and tap and tap." The routine was made up of standard drill movements, rifle tosses and twirls, but the secret was precision . . . simple but precise! The routine was designed to look more dangerous than it was. However, rifles with fixed bayonets, spinning near faces as formations intermingled, usually brought "OOHs" and "AAHs" from the audience. As our confidence and ability improved, progress came more quickly. The platoon soon had a drill routine with a beginning, a middle and an end. Day after day, we worked at improving, correcting and eventually, perfecting the routine. By late March we were able to perform our silent drill routine without commands and a minimum of errors. After one particularly good performance, the critique showed that everyone had made at least one small mistake. That means there was a minimum of 24 errors, some big, some small. As we became more proficient as a unit, we would make intentional mistakes and practice recovery. Most of the mistakes would never be seen by the audience . . . IF . . . the recovery was smooth. The platoon was looking good. We were ready.

Once during an actual performance, I really messed up. The platoon was marching in a 24 man square and I missed a count. 23 men pivoted smartly and marched to the rear, while I continued forward. When I realized that I was all alone, I wanted to turn and catch up with the platoon, but the hours and hours of practice kept me from panicking. I halted . . . faced the audience . . . and went through a series of rifle spins and tosses. I then pivoted and rejoined the platoon as it came down the field. The audience thought I had a solo and applauded my efforts. Thanks to practice, I didn't make a fool of myself.

As the upcoming Parade Season drew near , my platoon (2dPlt) proceeded to Camp David, MD as the Perimeter Security Detail for Dwight D. Eisenhower, President of the United States. In light of everything else we were trying to accomplish, this detail was considered a real “pain-in-the-butt.” The officers and NCO's had to remind the men that security of the President at Camp David was Ceremonial Guard Company's primary mission. Everything else would have to wait. Upon return to the barracks, the hours, days and weeks would be long and chaotic. Rehearsals would be continuous . . . preparation endless.

### **PRESIDENTIAL RETREAT - CAMP DAVID, MARYLAND**

We traveled the 80 or so miles to Camp David by bus. There were no super highways, just narrow, twisting country roads and it turned into a long, boring ride. The young Marines quickly got restless and they began to shed the stress of life at the barracks. Cat-calls out the windows at young women in passing cars, flicking ears with snapping fingers, and anything else one would expect from a school bus full of third and fourth graders. Their conduct was embarrassing and I applied every bit of leadership I knew, but it produced limited results. These were the days when enlisted Marines below the rank of Staff Sergeant were required to carry a liberty card. No liberty card, no liberty. Suddenly, everything became quiet and as I patted myself on the back for my leadership ability, I realized that the PltSgt, SSgt Coffin had lowered his window and was flipping the platoon's liberty cards out the window. The men became quiet as they watched the liberty cards sail out the window with a measured precision. There would be no liberty for the next week. I learned another valuable leadership lesson. Mass punishment, though not desirable, was an effective tool. The remainder of the ride was quiet as the men sulked and brooded a bit. Little did they, or I for that matter, realize that there would be no liberty while the President was at Camp David. Also, these were old liberty cards from Coffin's previous platoon. Another valuable lesson was learned, “Stay one step ahead of children and young Marines.”

We passed through the little town of Thurmont, MD, and started up into the mountains. The road up the mountain was barely two lanes and wound thru the heavy woods like a snake. There were several small bridges along the route. SSgt Coffin pointed out that the Marines were responsible to check them for explosives and then, from a hidden location, ensure that they were not tampered with when the President was en route. It was exciting to think that we would be guarding the President of the United States. Camp David was located on top of Catoclin Mountain. It consisted of the main lodge for the President, several smaller lodges for visiting dignitaries, and a large building which housed the Navy personnel, the messhall and the guard office. All of these buildings were rustic and resembled hunting lodges for the rich and famous. Scattered among the many trees were small cabins, much like those found at summer camp, that housed the Marines. We froze in the winter and sweated profusely

in the summer. There was a small cabin that served as a gate house, a helicopter landing pad, an Army communications tower and for President Eisenhower, a well manicured two hole golf course on the side of the mountain. Basically, the Marines were responsible for security along the outer perimeter, the Secret Service the interior security, the Army operated the communications and the Navy was responsible for maintaining the buildings and grounds. The senior naval officer assigned billeting, established meal times and requested working parties for grounds maintenance. Whenever possible, he made our life miserable, but set himself up as the recipient of many a practical joke. The Marines would bait him and then thoroughly enjoy his frustration and pathetic attempt at being military. I felt sorry for him, but his discomfort kept the young Marines from finding more devious ways of getting into trouble.

These were hand picked, intelligent, highly motivated troops, but, at times, they acted like the mischievous teenagers they were. They only responded to Marine authority, all others were fair game. One of their favorite stunts was hiding the navy lieutenant's jeep in the woods. Once they even dug a hole and buried it. SSgt Coffin and I hated to be summoned to his office, because we knew the troops had once again gotten to him. We managed to keep him from "pressing charges," if the pranks stopped. It was fun watching the navy lieutenant. get red in the face and jump up and down. The game between the Marines and the lieutenant resembled the Three Stooges, or Wiley Coyote and the Roadrunner. Reluctantly, we stepped in and put an end to the pranks.

Fortunately, things became much calmer as word reached us that The President would arrive the next day. The camp became a beehive of activity. The Secret Service was everywhere and we actually saw one of the army communicators. The President's Limousine and accompanying security vehicles would arrive around noon. It was Spring of 1956 and the use of helicopters was limited, however, this would change over the next few years. At first light a detail of Marines would proceed down the mountain and visually check each of the bridges along the mountain road. A security team would remain at each location to ensure the President's safety. The perimeter fence was checked for possible tampering and armed sentries were posted. The guard detail at the gate was increased and all communications were checked. We were ready! When the President's cavalcade proceeded up the mountain, the sentries would be picked up and returned to camp. In 1957-1958, helicopters would be used instead of the limousine and our job was a little easier.

Everyone not physically on watch was turned to on various police details. The entire camp was well policed and looked ship-shape. The Marines seemed to sense that it was time to be extremely serious. The seriousness was evident in the orders concerning lethal force. At any normal duty station, a sentry would challenge three times and shoot to disable, that is, if he was permitted to have live ammo. At Camp

David, all rifles and/or pistols were loaded with live ammo and the orders to the sentries were, "Challenge and shoot to kill!" This was serious business and the young Marines responded accordingly.

The Head of the Secret Service, Mr. Rowley, briefed Lt Foster, SSgt Coffin and myself on our duties prior to the President's arrival and what would be expected during his stay at Camp David. As the designated Sergeant of the Guard, I took Mr. Rowley on a jeep tour of the outer perimeter, which was a bulldozed road just inside the 10 or 12 ft. high fence topped with concertina wire. There were small sentry booths at irregular points along the trace. They were spaced in such a way as to allow a visual inspection of the entire length of the trace. Each sentry booth was equipped with a direct phone line to the Sergeant of the Guard's office, which in turn had direct access to the Secret Service duty desk. Mr. Rowley was satisfied with our preparations and took Lt Foster, SSgt Coffin and myself on a tour of the President's lodge. The walls of the lodge were expensively paneled or highly stained logs, giving it a rustic look. It was magnificently furnished, like something out of a movie. A very large stone fireplace dominated the main room, and it was adorned with an intricately carved eagle with a wingspan of 6-8 feet. It was a beautiful eagle and, for the next three years I dreamed of acquiring it, or if you must, I wanted to steal it. What a souvenir that would make? It never happened, but it was fun to plan. Mr. Rowley explained that the vital parts of Camp David were underground. Out of necessity, I must remain vague on many of the specific aspects of Camp David. Anything I mention here is fairly common knowledge and most likely, completely obsolete. Just being there was unbelievable. Being a key player in protecting the President of the United States was almost more than any 21 year old ego could handle. The fact that we could fail in our mission. or that I could be killed doing this, never entered my mind.

Under the President's lodge there was a Command Center, which he could enter by elevator from several locations within the lodge, including his bedroom. From the command Center, his image could be televised to any location in the world to assure people that he was alive and the government was functioning. There was a War Room from which a global war could be directed. There was a heavy security door leading into this area from the side of the President's lodge. A Marine, armed with a loaded M-1 rifle, was always stationed at this door during a presidential visit. Special badges were required to enter this door and the sentry's orders were specific No Badge . . . No Entry . . . PERIOD! This created my first crisis as the Sergeant of the Guard at Camp David. It wouldn't be the last, but in many ways was the most serious.

Early one morning, during the President's visit, Mr. Rowley approached the Marine sentry posted at the door leading into the underground command center. The Marine snapped to attention and saluted by presenting arms, and said, "Good morning Mr. Rowley." Mr. Rowley snarled a greeting and proceeded to pass the sentry. The sentry widened his stance and blocked the way with his rifle. Mr. Rowley glared and

wanted to know why he was being banned from entering. The Marine informed him that he wasn't wearing the required badge. No badge . . . No entry, was an order Mr. Rowley stressed. Mr. Rowley became highly irritated and declared, "You idiot! You know who I am, you called me by name!" The sentry replied, "You look like Mr. Rowley, but without the badge, you're not opening that door ." Mr. Rowley screamed obscenities and attempted to push his way past the sentry. The sentry swung the butt of his rifle in an arc that hit Mr. Rowley squarely on the shoulder and catapulted him into the rock garden on one side of the walkway. His pride damaged, his trousers torn and his body bruised from the fall onto the rocks, he jumped up scowling at the sentry. He stormed off threatening to send him to Adak, Alaska for duty. The sentry picked up the phone and when I answered, he quickly explained what had happened. I asked only one question! "Were you in the right?" He said, " Yes!" I left the guard office at a run, heading for the Secret Service cabin. I could see Mr. Rowley running through the trees heading for the same place. I could tell he was really pissed and that he would beat me to the cabin. He entered the cabin and slammed the door. I arrived shortly after him and quickly opened the door. He was already on the phone holding for the Commanding Officer of the Marine Barracks. He held up his hand to keep me from saying anything and proceeded to tell the CO what had happened. He finished by recommending the sentry for a Letter of Commendation and telling Colonel Williams that this was exactly why they used Marines for security. They were young, full of esprit de corps and they obeyed orders, almost to a fault. He looked at me and asked if I would convey his apology to the sentry. Before I could answer, he declared, "NO! I made an ass of myself and I should apologize in person!" He thanked me and, after putting on his badge, proceeded to the sentry's post. His apology to a Marine went over well with the troops. He gained their respect and, believe me, " No Badge . . . No Entry" meant just that. To the best of my knowledge, it was never questioned or challenged again. Working with the Secret Service was an exciting experience. They are real professionals and they take their job seriously. I would work closely with Mr. Rowley in the years ahead and the mutual respect fostered by this incident never waned.

The President's stay was brief and uneventful from a security aspect. He unexpectedly visited the guard office one morning and we were introduced by Mr. Rowley. I cannot describe the thrill of shaking hands with Dwight D. Eisenhower. In fact, I don't think it really sunk in until much later. I shook hands with the President .... WOW! The reason for his visit was to meet the young Marine who had upended his security chief. I immediately summoned the Marine, a 6' 3" Irishman from Boston. The President shook his hand and told him to keep up the good work. President Eisenhower was always very gracious with the young enlisted Marines he encountered during his visits to Camp David or in the White House. There is no doubt that we would have died to protect him.

Our stay at Camp David was short, as was the case in 1956, but everything

would change in 1957-58. A fourth platoon would be added to Ceremonial Guard Company and one platoon would be billeted at Camp David. The duty at Camp David would rotate every two weeks and provide a welcome relief from the spit-and-polish of Washington, DC. On the down side, it would take creative leadership to keep the young Marines mentally and physically alert and gainfully occupied. When the President wasn't at Camp David, or his farm in Gettysburg, the troops were given liberty passes. This rural community would never be the same. The favorite hangout in Thurmont was the "Thurmont Tavern," a bar that served hamburgers and other easy to prepare foods. Eventually, live music was added and this place became a goldmine for Sonny, the owner. As the word spread, women from as far away as Fredricksburg, MD and Gettysburg, PA would show up on the weekends. These tall (6'-6'4") well proportioned Marines, in the prime of their youth, would soon be invited to church and community socials and to the homes of some of the local girls. Due to their age, some of them began attending high school dances. Love was in bloom, but none of the relationships seemed to flourish. We were in Thurmont for two weeks and gone for six weeks, a lifetime when you're a teenager. At 21-22, I was an old man and as a sergeant trying to maintain unit integrity, soon became quite adept at counseling my love birds. I learned quickly that everyone is an individual, especially in matters of the heart. It soon became known that with our rotating schedule, some of the more precocious young ladies had a "special friend" in each platoon. Another place that benefitted from our presence was the delicatessen across the street from the Thurmont Tavern. They made the greatest sandwiches, whether you called them hoagies, subs or poorboys, they were big and they were good. Almost every night, a sandwich run was made from the mountain to the deli. At night, the hairpin turns on the sharply curved mountain road took their toll on the guard jeep and, as you might expect, the naval lieutenant went a little crazy at times. During one of our stays on the mountain, one of my gate guards threw an uneaten piece of sandwich out the door of the gate house. To his utter amazement, a full grown skunk came out from under the shack and ate the sandwich. He told the other reliefs and they began feeding the skunk each evening. After the skunk ate the sandwich, he returned to his home under the gate house. This went on for two weeks, but when we briefed the incoming platoon, we forgot to mention our pet skunk. To this day, I don't know if it was intentional, but it created a humorous incident. That first night on duty, the usual sandwich run was made. It was a starless night and a light mist hung close to the ground. The one light at the gate cast eerie shadows as it moved on a gentle breeze. The gate sentry finished his sandwich and leaned back in his chair wondering what to do for the rest of his four hour watch. When the President wasn't at Camp David, it was very quiet and boredom was a constant companion. He heard a scraping noise at the Dutch door. The top was open and he could see no one at the door. Suspecting a prank, he got up and jerked the door open and out of the mist came a black and white form . . . A SKUNK! The startled sentry didn't know the skunk only wanted his piece of sandwich and as the skunk started into the gate house, the sentry panicked. He drew his .45 Caliber pistol and fired three shots at what he called an "Attacking Beast!" All three shots missed the



skunk, but he put two holes in the floor and one in the wall. He had missed, but the skunk didn't. As the frightened skunk headed for the woods, he let go with a spray that got the sentry and the gate house. The relieving sentry took up his post, but quite a distance from the gate house, which had to be burned down the next day. The sentry became a loner. They put him in a separate cabin and made him take his meals outside. The smell lingered for several weeks, but was gone by the time we returned. My platoon never told anyone about feeding the skunk and when we returned, they put out pieces of sandwich, but the skunk never reappeared. I'll revisit Camp David later in my story, but for now we'll return to the Marine Barracks, Washington, DC and our first parade season. It is late spring, 1956.

### **PARADE SEASON . . . SUMMER OF 1956**

Upon returning from Camp David, our attention was focused on the upcoming parade season. Besides the never ending practice sessions to perfect the silent drill routine, parade rehearsals began in earnest. The freshly seeded parade deck was still covered with manure and the playground was too small, but that didn't slow things down in the slightest. The platoons were bussed to a city park along the Anacostia River and we spent hour after hour perfecting our ability to maintain shoulder to shoulder alignment across a 12 man front. Time after time, the commands of, "PASS IN REVIEW" and "SOUND ADJUTANT'S CALL," reverberated along the river and under the stone bridges. We mimicked the command of "Pass in Review" as "Piss in Your Shoe." Our platoons spent hours perfecting the execution of "FIX BAYONETS," which always pleased the spectators. The days were still cold and occasional snow flurries added to our discomfort. I was beginning to think we'd never walk on this hallowed and pampered square known as "The Parade Deck," but in the week or two preceding the first sunset parade of the season, we actually had a full dress rehearsal. It was like being in the big league . . . the NFL . . . I was impressed! The parade would consist of a command staff, three platoons from Ceremonial Guard Company, three platoons from MCI Company, the Color Guard, the Drum and Bugle Corps and the world famous Marine Band, known as, "The President's Own." One of the three silent drill platoons would be designated to perform the silent drill during the parade and this opportunity would be rotated among the platoons of Ceremonial Guard Company. The Sunset Parades were scheduled each Friday at 1730 (5: 30 pm) and as we got further into the summer months, the heat and humidity were brutal. In 1956, the Marine blue uniform was made of 100% wool, similar to that of a blanket, only with brass buttons. At times, you could feel the sweat start inside the high collar around your neck, run down your back and continue down the leg of your trousers into your shoes. By the end of the parade, or any other summer ceremony, your blue coat was soaking wet with sweat. The trousers were starched white cotton. a small blessing, and the Corps even laundered them at no charge to the individual.

The Barracks wasn't air-conditioned, so there was no relief once the parade was

dismissed. We returned to the squad bays and the uniform coats were turned inside out and hung near a window to dry and air out. The smell of wet wool permeated our existence and when you pressed the uniform, the odor became really offensive. In fact, many times I wished that we had been issued a gas mask. You might wonder why we didn't just have the uniforms cleaned and pressed. There are several reasons why we didn't: One, we were issued only two blue coats and with several details on most days, there just wasn't time. Two, we couldn't afford the dry cleaning expense on our pay. It was a choice between dry cleaning and drinking. Which one do you think we gave the highest priority? The young Marines described their perfect woman as a nymphomaniac, that owned a bar and a dry cleaning shop. Unfortunately, women meeting these special criteria were not easily found, but we never stopped dreaming and thoroughly enjoyed the search for the perfect woman. Lastly, the uniform held a much sharper crease when the sweat was pressed into the fabric. Crude and smelly, but effective! In the 1960's, the uniforms were made of a much lighter weight serge and the troops would live in air-conditioned squad bays, but my story takes place in the 1950's. Always the historian, I couldn't help but imagine what it must have been like to right in uniforms like the ones we were wearing. During the Civil War, soldiers on both sides fought in uniforms made of a much heavier wool than ours. At Gettysburg, they fought in the heat and humidity of a sweltering July in Pennsylvania. There is no doubt in my mind that they were hard men, hot, sweaty and uncomfortable, but tough and able to fight. We soon had hot, sweaty and uncomfortable completely mastered. we worked on being tough and practiced our fighting in the many bars near the Barracks.

Fridays were usually hectic and full of parade preparations. The two platoons that weren't designated to perform their silent drill, had Gunny Bunce's "Chair Detail," another of his famous special naval assignments. The Band Hall was full of heavy folding chairs, that were bolted to runners in sections of three or four chairs each. Each section was carried by two Marines placed in rows along the spectator's side of the parade deck. After the parade, the blue uniforms were taken off and hung up to air and we changed into our utilities (fatigues). The chairs had to be removed from the parade deck and returned to the Band Hall before the troops, those not on guard duty, could have liberty. It became a much hated Friday ritual and we prayed for rain, since that was the only reason for cancellation. We really enjoyed the actual parade and the "oohs" and "aahs" of the spectators, it was the preparation and cleanup that was such a pain.

The Parade Season provided a few unusually great opportunities for showing off our skills and military precision. During the 1956 season, my platoon performed at the Azalea Festival in Mobile, Alabama and entertained the "52 Association" at New York's Waldorf Astoria Hotel. We performed at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, during the General Court Martial of a drill instructor, who accidentally drowned six recruits in a swampy area known as Ribbon Creek. This incident received

worldwide notoriety. Of a less spectacular nature, were performances in Endicott, NY, and Cleveland, OH. Between these traveling performances, were the Friday parades at the Barracks, the Tuesday parades at the Iwo lima Memorial, countless funerals in Arlington National cemetery, White House Details, Honor Guards for visiting dignitaries, security at Camp David and last but not least, guard duty at Marine Barracks. Our schedule was busy, but all in all, we enjoyed most of it. The spectators were always appreciative and there was never a shortage of young ladies to make us feel special, and of course, the many old veterans who wanted to buy us a drink or two. ..as we listened to countless stories about how it was in the "Old Corps." Life in Ceremonial Guard Company was busy and a lot of work, but the feelings of self-esteem and self-satisfaction amply compensated us. It was a highpoint in my 22 year career as a Marine. There would be others, but none as special.

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I cannot seem to remember which traveling detail occurred first, or for that matter, in which month they took place. Therefore, I'll simply visit them in the order they appear in the preceding paragraph.

The detail in Mobile, Alabama, was a memorable one. We were to perform in Land Memorial Stadium as part of the " Azalea Festival. " Our military air transport landed at McCord AFB and we learned that we would be billeted there. The Air Force definitely lived better than most Marines. The barracks, a loose use of the word, was really a motel type building. We would be billeted two or three men to a room, which was a great improvement over the 40 man open squad bays we were used to. The rooms had both heat and air-conditioning and, all the bunks, or rather beds, were singles (no upper and lower bunks to fight over). The Air Force really had it made, but we took pride in our lack of common creature comforts in the Marine Corps, however, air-conditioning would have been a nice touch back in Washington, DC. The food in the Dining Facility (mess hall) was very good and much appreciated by the Marines .

An Air Force colonel briefed the So or so Marines about the city of Mobile and the surrounding community. In the Marines, the colonel would've told the lieutenant and he would pass it to the Staff NCOs, who in turn would tell the NCOs and they would tell the other enlisted men. In the Air Force, it seemed like you were lumped into one of two categories. Officers in one group and all enlisted lumped into the other group. I preferred the Marine chain of command. At least I was an NCO, a Sergeant of Marines!

During the briefing, we were warned to stay out of a particular section of Mobile and in the event we inadvertently wound up there, stay clear of a club named "Joe Palookas," or something like that. Naturally, when the briefing was over and we were dismissed, everyone took a bus or a cab to "Joe Palookas." It turned out to be our

kind of a place . . . cold beer, pretty girls and a big dance floor. There were a few minor altercations, but nothing serious. The locals usually backed down when confronted with several large Marines. As we were leaving the club, another NCO and I were approached by a man who flashed a badge and told us to keep moving. We started down the street and assumed he was right behind us, but after a couple of blocks, I turned around to ask him where we were going? He wasn't there! Boy, did we ever feel foolish. We later found out that the police had been alerted and they were just moving people away from the club's entrance to prevent crowds from gathering. An effective method of fight prevention.

I can't recall what happened in the stadium, but outside, we had a visit from Miss America, Lee Ann Meriwether while we waited to perform. She was a beautiful woman and chatted with us for some time. She had the most infectious laugh and autographed the top of several white caps and left a red lipstick imprint on several others. We enjoyed her visit, but both she and the platoon had business to attend to. After performing inside the stadium, we put our weapons on the buses and went to watch the parade of floats and bands. After a cold beer, I found a good vantage point and watched the parade proceed down the street. No Marines were scheduled to participate, but on almost every float, especially those carrying young girls, there now appeared, my Marines from 2nd Platoon. I had to smile because even the spectators were applauding enthusiastically. My men were enjoying themselves, as were the young girls. All went well and everyone made muster in the morning. The people of Mobile had loved the cocky young Marines in "Yankee Blue" and they treated us with Southern Hospitality. There had been a few "Yankee" jokes.

The "52 Association" was an organization that sponsored entertainment in veteran's hospitals. They were older, very wealthy people and were having their annual awards banquet. Each of the four services was to provide a form of entertainment for what appeared to be mostly women. The Army had Mel Torme, who was featured with the U.S. Army Band. The U.S. Navy Band performed and Air Force provided a jazz combo. The U.S. Marine Corps was represented by the 2nd Platoon's 12-man silent drill team. Believe it or not, we got the biggest applause, and when we entered the ballroom to sit at our assigned tables, we found that we were paired up with a like number of women. Later, we were told that these older, very wealthy Jewish women from New York, had actually donated big dollars to sit with the Marines after they watched us perform our silent drill. I've never had more fun at a banquet. Each table had a bottle of scotch, bourbon, vodka and rum. These women kept us laughing and when the bottles on our tables were empty, they would go around the hall and steal bottles from the other tables. One lady knew the location of several bottles of bourbon and she went to get them. She was successful, and everyone complimented her on her bootleg booze. The first person to take a drink from one of the bottles, spit it out. it was colored water in display bottles. We all laughed and then one of the ladies, a Mrs. Grossinger, invited us to the West Astor Lounge to finish the

evening.

When we got to the lounge, it was immediately obvious that we could not afford to buy water in this place and we confessed our plight. Mrs. Grossinger told us not to worry about it, and she led us to a large table where several members of her family were sitting. SSgt Coffin and I were introduced around the table. Drinks were ordered and it became quite clear that our money was no good, not even if we had been able to scrape up enough to buy a round. I was a little intimidated by their obvious wealth.

We would later learn that the Grossinger family owned Grossinger's, a very popular ski resort in the Catskill Mountains. At one point, Mr. Grossinger called a waiter over and gave him a ten dollar bill and told him to bring him a pack of cigarettes. When the waiter returned, Mr. Grossinger told him to keep the change, a tidy sum in 1956. At this time, I was about to be extremely embarrassed. When Mr. Grossinger told the waiter to keep the change. SSgt Coffin, a native of Brooklyn said, "Geez Mr.G! I'd'uv gone for two bucks!" There was silence as I tried to slide under the table. I was mortified! I knew he was crude, but how could Coffin say something like that? Shortly, Coffin excused himself and left the lounge. To this day, I don't think he realizes what he did that night. The conversation returned to normal and I was invited to spend a weekend at the Grossinger Resort. I readily accepted and thanked them. It would be several months before I could take them up on their offer. They picked me up in their private plane and once at the resort, I couldn't pay for anything. The entire staff knew I was Mr. Grossinger's guest and they were at my beck and call. Once I commented on the beauty of a particular woman. the next thing I knew, she was sitting next to me. When I was first invited, I was asked to wear my uniform during my stay, which I did! It was a small price to pay for a great weekend. I definitely made sure that my blue coat was freshly cleaned before the weekend. Life among the rich and famous could become addicting, however, not on a sergeant's pay. My earnings in 1956 were \$1,918.00.

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Newspaper headlines condemned the Marine Corps' training methods. A Marine Drill Instructor who had been drinking, led his platoon of recruits into a swampy area known as Ribbon Creek. The tide was a little higher than usual and the night dark. The smaller men found themselves in water over their heads and panic set in. While the platoon thrashed around, the DI's tried desperately to lead them to the safety of dry land. Deep, murky swamp water, recruits screaming in fear and DI's barking commands, a recipe for disaster. Six recruits would not return, they would drown that fateful night in 1956.

The Marine Commandant, General Randolph McCall Pate would immediately

order a General Court Martial for the DI, SSgt McKeon. The Marine Corps' hierarchy would be divided in their opinions. The Commandant wanted SSgt McCain tried for murder, but cooler heads prevailed and LtGen “Chesty” Puller, a Marine icon, came out of retirement to testify on behalf of drill instructors and the Corps' training methods. Meanwhile, recruit morale had dropped to dangerous levels. That's where we came in! It was determined that several performances by the silent drill team and drum and bugle corps would help restore morale within the recruit platoons. The 2nd Platoon got the assignment and we were flown to MCAS Beaufort, SC and were taken by bus to MCRD Parris Island. We performed twice at main side and on the at the rifle range, ensuring that every recruit would have an opportunity to watch a performance. The recruits seemed to enjoy the show and we were told that we had accomplished our mission. recruit morale was up and training resumed.

As far as I know, all of us had graduated from Parris Island and this was like a trip home. It was fun to walk around the base and visit the PX or the snack bar, without a DI looking over your shoulder. I didn't realize it as a recruit, but Parris Island was a beautiful base. Several of us had tried to attend the Court Martial while LtGen Puller was testifying, but it was so crowded we couldn't even get near the building. Thanks to LtGen Puller's testimony and an outpouring of support, SSgt McCain was only found guilty of negligent homicide and drinking on duty. He was sentenced to be reduced to private, fined \$270, confined for nine months and separated with a bad conduct discharge. The sentence created a storm of protest and many claimed that McCain had been a scapegoat for a failed training system. The Secretary of the Navy reduced the confinement to three months and dropped the fine and bad conduct discharge. A sad chapter for the Marines.

The trip to Parris Island had been good for my platoon. We had visited the place where we had undergone our transformation from disorganized, undisciplined civilians, to U.S. Marines. It was an enormous lift for our egos, though already inflated, to see first hand the transformation that had occurred. In a relatively short period, we had gone from raggedy-assed recruits to a highly polished precision drill team capable of thrilling large crowds and we had guarded the President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower . For some reason, this detail had a very positive effect on my Marines. They banded together as a unit and became inseparable. Discipline problems were almost nonexistent as these young men matured. They were Marines of whom I was extremely proud and without the slightest hesitation, would've matched them against any similar unit, even the other drill platoons of Ceremonial Guard Company. The rivalry was intense, but good natured.

### **ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY**

No story about duty with Ceremonial Guard Company would be complete, without tales of our many funeral details in Arlington National Cemetery. There were

times when we would be bused to Arlington with box lunches. We would provide the burial detail for three or four funerals in the morning, eat our lunch on the bus, and then provide two or three more burial details before returning to the Barracks. A normal burial detail would consist of six body bearers {pallbearers), an eight man firing party, a field music (bugler) and the NCO in charge. While the other services had special units that specialized in each of these areas, the Marines had to be flexible. We had three platoons, while the Army had six or more companies to do the same job. As usual, we had to do with less, and in our typical Marine arrogance, always strived to be the best in any joint detail with the other services. It was relatively easy to out-perform the Air Force or the Navy, but the Army was tough. The “Old Guard” Regiment at Fort Meyers was a terrific ceremonial unit. An example of their professionalism is the sentry at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. They were good, but we felt we were better and most of the time we were.

Though most funerals were the typical 16 man basic detail, they could become quite large, depending on the rank or position of the person being buried. The funeral for a flag officer (general/admiral) would have at least four platoons and the Color Guard, along with a battalion staff. Funerals of this size would be augmented with a horse drawn artillery caisson and a saddled riderless horse, with a pair of boots hanging over the saddle, toes to the rear .These special units were furnished by the Army's "Old Guard" Regiment and were manned by soldiers, regardless of the funeral's primary service.

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For the most part, large funerals for government officials and flag officers were just another detail. They were long and hot in summer and long and brutally cold in the winter, and of course, there was always the possibility of rain. Arlington Cemetery has thousands of shade trees, but we always seemed to be in the sun. One funeral in particular stands out.

The funeral was for a general officer and we had four platoons and the color guard, plus the caisson and saddle horse. The general had been cremated, and as a Marine carrying his ashes exited the chapel, we were called to attention and ordered to “Present Arms.” The Marine carried the ceramic urn straight out in front of his chest. Very smart looking, but not really too smart, because it blocked his vision. The entire area in front of the chapel was covered with red bricks in an intricate pattern. Half-way out was a small, four inch step, which was hard to see because of the brick pattern. While carrying the urn in a very ceremonial manner, the Marine stepped off the step and was totally caught off-guard, his leading leg buckled and his whole body snapped forward. The urn went up in the air and as a hundred eyes followed its flight, you could actually hear the intake of breath. The Marine stood dumbfounded and watched the urn spin gently in the air and strike the brick walkway. I t shattered and

spilled the ashes on the walkway. He recovered quickly and dropped to his knees next to the ashes. He took off his white cover and set it on the bricks. He immediately started scooping the ashes into his cap. His white cotton gloves had been dampened to provide a better grip and they quickly turned gray. as they soaked up the general's ashes. The chaplain ran up to the kneeling Marine and took the white cover containing the ashes back into the chapel. Another Marine exited the chapel carrying a heavy metal urn and the funeral continued as if nothing had happened, though it was a little difficult to remain solemn. The marine that dropped the urn suddenly received orders transferring him out of the Barracks. We later heard that he had been sent to Adak, Alaska for duty.

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At one funeral, a navy admiral tried pulling his sword from its scabbard. He tugged and jerked at it, but it would not budge. Three platoons of Marines and three platoons of Sailors watched as he got red-faced and very frustrated. He ordered one of the junior officers in his staff to grasp the scabbard and pull, while he held the hilt (handle) of the sword. There was a loud "SNAP," and the admiral found himself holding a sword with a six or seven inch blade. He threw it to the ground and took the junior officer's sword. It was pretty obvious that the admiral had used his sword to cut a cake and then put it in the scabbard without cleaning the icing off the blade. Over a period of time, the sugar in the icing actually ate through the metal of the sword blade. It was an object lesson to all of us that carried swords -- clean the blade thoroughly before putting it in the scabbard!

On rainy days, we had to be extremely careful of our footing. The wet grass and the green cloth around the grave site became quite slippery. On one particular day, it had been raining for some time and everything was slippery as ice. I had positioned my firing party on high ground overlooking the grave site. I watched the body bearers struggle under the weight of the casket as they moved across the mud and wet grass toward the grave. As they positioned the casket over the straps spanning the grave, I watched as one of the body bearers struggled to maintain his balance. Suddenly, he disappeared under the casket and slid into the grave. Fortunately, he didn't pull anyone in with him. I stared in disbelief as a pair of white gloved hands came out of the grave and wrapped around the metal frame. He was on his own as he struggled to free himself, for the other men were busy with the casket and fighting a losing battle against the giggles. I had one of the men in the firing party ground his weapon and go help the body bearers. He tried to rush and lost his footing, then slid about 50 feet on his butt. Needless to say, any attempt at being solemn was useless. Even the family mourners at the grave site were laughing, but trying desperately not to. We managed to finish the funeral without further mishap, but the officer from HQMC that observed the antics of my platoon, was very unhappy and wasted no time in telling me how he felt about our performance. He managed to keep a straight face in spite of himself and,



believe me, there was nothing he could say that would make me feel any worse. There would be other mishaps, but this was by far the worst!

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I don't want to give the impression that we took our duty in Arlington National Cemetery lightly. However, I probably participated in at least 200 or 300 funerals of various sizes, the vast majority of which were dignified and appropriately solemn. I've only talked about funerals that stand out in my memory after 40 plus years. A well executed funeral isn't very interesting to write about, so please, bear with me as I share my memories of burial details in Arlington, especially those that were less than perfect.

Somewhere along the way, a funeral detail had been overlooked when the scheduling board was updated. I received a frantic summons to report to the arcade outside the Gunny's office, with a firing party and body bearers for immediate transport to Arlington. We mustered quickly and boarded the bus. I almost forgot the blank ammo, but managed to stop the bus and sent a man for the ammo. He returned and we left for Arlington. It was going to be close, but we could make it on time, if the traffic cooperated. The funeral was deep in the cemetery and we arrived just ahead of the hearse. The body bearers lined up to receive the casket when it arrived and I moved the firing party up a small hill to a good location. We could be seen, but we were far enough away to soften the sound of the three volleys we would fire. The mourners usually jumped on the first volley if you were too close. As I watched the hearse slowly approach the body bearers, one of my Marines said, "Sgt Burton . . . do we have a field music?" I quickly glanced in all directions and couldn't see one. I asked if anyone had seen him on the bus and received a negative reply. It became obvious that I had forgotten the field music. I began to sweat a little and I turned to my Marines and told them, "After we fire the last volley, you will hum taps on my count of three . . . IS THAT UNDERSTOOD?" They indicated that they would do their very best BUT would it be good enough? About that time, we observed a green staff car as it sped among the trees along the narrow winding road. It came to a sudden stop and the field music jumped out and began running to a good spot. I received the signal and went through the procedure of firing three volleys. Upon firing the final volley, I faced them to the front and ordered, "PRESENT ARMS." I executed an about face and saluted with my sword, waiting to hear the sad notes of taps being played. Nothing happened. I looked toward the bugler and saw that he had run too far, too fast, and didn't have enough wind left to get a sound out of his bugle. I turned to the firing party and said, "On the count of three, you will hum taps . . . loudly . . . ONE . . . TWO . . . THREE . . . HUM!" Just as they started to hum, the bugler found his breath and the sound of taps echoed among the trees. It was a little weak, but it sounded like a symphony to me. Without taps, this could've been my ticket to Adak, Alaska. "All's well, that ends well!"

Without the slightest doubt, this was the most unusual funeral I participated in during my three and a half years in Ceremonial Guard Company. A Marine transport plane had crashed in North Carolina and several Marines were killed. One of them was a young, black corporal from Washington, DC and my platoon was assigned the detail. It was unusual in that we would meet the hearse at a small church in SE Washington. We had to carry the casket from the sidewalk into the church, then up a ladder well (stairs) to the chapel. I had formed the firing party in two ranks along the sidewalk into the church and we waited for the hearse and casket to arrive. As time passed, the crowd of black folks continued to grow in size. Their friend or relative had been killed by the Marines and here we were, alone and vulnerable. Some threatening comments were heard coming from the growing crowd and I hoped it wouldn't become a mob. Acting as if it was the normal way of doing things, I had the firing party fix bayonets. They wouldn't do us much good if the crowd turned ugly, but it made us feel better. The hearse arrived and the body bearers took the casket into the church. To get up to the chapel, they would have to climb a narrow stairway with a landing. The six Marines carrying the casket couldn't fit next to it on the narrow stairs. It was awkward, but they managed to reach the chapel on the second floor, dreading the trip back down the stairs.

The small chapel was filled to capacity with a sea of swaying, chanting black folks. A mixture of "HALLELUJAHs and PRAISE DA LORD" filled the air, however the mother, a very obese woman, was in rare form. She moved through the crowd holding her arms up in the air, swaying back and forth. All the while she was chanting, "GEOGE, GEOGE, YO's GOIN' TO DA LAWD's HOUSE!" The other people picked up the chant and joined in, repeating it over and over . . . "HALLELUJAH!" We remained at "Fixed Bayonets."

The service ended and the casket was rolled to the top of the stairs. The body bearers picked up the casket and tried to position themselves for the trip down the stairs. Two Marines took up positions on the front corners and started to back down the stairs. The others tried to hold it back and they proceeded slowly down the stairs. All of a sudden out of nowhere . . . came the mother screaming, "GEOGE, GEOGE, DON'T LEAVE YO MAMA .... DON'T LEAVE ME SON!" I don't know how she did it, but she launched all 300 lbs. past the Marines and landed on top of the casket. The sudden, extra weight was too much for the men on the front and they fell backwards. The casket slid over them and crashed into the wall on the landing. George's mother fell off and rolled down the stairs, all the way to the bottom. She never shut up, but her chants became screams as she thumped and thudded down the steps. Fortunately, she wasn't hurt, with the exception of a few bruises. The body bearers later claimed they could hear the body bouncing around inside the casket. They recovered their

composure as they lifted the casket and navigated the remaining stairs. The casket reached the hearse safely and was quickly slid into place. We marched thru the crowd in a tight formation and I kept the men at PORT ARMS (rifles held diagonally across the chest), bayonets attached. There were no incidents and we boarded the bus. As we cleared the area around the church, the young men lost it. They laughed hysterically as they recounted the mornings events. They mimicked, “GEOGE, . . . YO'S GOIN' TO A BIGGA HOUSE . . . DA LAWD'S HOUSE!” They laughed so hard they cried as they described the fat lady, flying thru the air and landing on top of the casket. The story always ended with a loud . . . “SPLAT!” We still had the grave site rituals to perform, so I allowed them to get the giggles out of their systems. It was a long bus ride to Arlington and the laughter never stopped. They were really wound up. . . AMEN!

We arrived ahead of the funeral procession and took up our positions. The body bearers waited at curbside and I moved the firing party onto a low ridge, as far away as practical. The crowd around the gravesite grew quickly and soon numbered about 1000 mourners. As the body bearers moved the casket toward the grave, a low rumble rose from the mourners. The intensity grew rapidly and soon the crowd was chanting again. “GEOGE, GEOGE . . . YO'S GOIN' TO A BETTA HOUSE . . . DA LAWD'S HOUSE!” As the crowd swayed and chanted, I thought of warriors dancing and stomping their feet. It was, STOMP, STOMP, “GEOGE, . . . GEOGE,” STOMP, STOMP, “GEOGE . . . GEOGE . . . YO GOIN' TO DA LAWD'S HOUSE,” STOMP, STOMP! . . . “HALLELUJAH . . . RAISE DA LAWD!” The funeral ended without incident. Everything at grave side went off without a hitch, and my young men were glad to return to the Barracks. Needless to say, this funeral provided many a laugh over the next few months and would never be forgotten . . . it was a classic.

Hundreds, maybe thousands of funerals took place each year. The body bearers moved the casket from the hearse and carried it to the grave. It was placed on the straps used to lower the casket into the grave and the American flag was lifted off the casket. The Marines pulled it taut and with white gloved hands, held it tight against their chin. The minister finished his service, the three volleys were fired, “Taps” was played on the bugle and the flag was folded with care and precision. The folded flag was presented to the next of kin. As mourners mingled and shared their grief, we moved off and boarded the buses for the return trip to the Barracks. Not very exciting, just another detail.

## **WASHINGTON, DC. ... FALL / WINTER 1957**

### **THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND VISITS THE UNITED STATES**

As the parade season came to a close, Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip of Great Britain visited Washington, DC. Needless to say, an honor guard of gigantic proportions was staged at National Airport. The Queen and Prince, accompanied by

President Eisenhower, rode in an open limousine down the line of assembled troops. There were three platoons each of Soldiers, Marines, Sailors and Airmen, with the Colors of each service massed in a single Color Guard. It was an impressive display of red, white, blue and gold as the flags fluttered and snapped on the cool autumn breeze. Each man in the ranks respected the ceremonial proficiency of British units on parade and strove to outdo them and impress the Queen and Prince. Each command was followed by a loud, "CRACK or POP!" The young Americans did themselves proud. They were flawless in their execution of each movement. I was extremely proud to be a part of this prestigious honor guard and I felt that even the Queen of England must be impressed. President Eisenhower sent word thru his Military Aide, that the Queen had thoroughly enjoyed our performance and had been impressed with our military bearing. He sent his personal, "Well Done!"

Prince Philip, as Commandant General of the Royal Marines, actually visited the Barracks. As befitting his rank and position, he was honored with a full parade and saluting battery. In reviewing the troops, he walked down both ranks and stopped numerous times to ask questions of the young Marines assembled in his honor. He seemed particularly interested in our shooting badges and commented favorably on the number of expert riflemen in the ranks. He stopped in front of me and chatted casually about my Korean Service medal. He asked if I had served near his Royal Marine, 41 Commando, during the Chosin Reservoir Campaign. I replied, "No Sir, I had been too young for that campaign." He smiled warmly and continued down the line of Marines.

A day or two later, Queen Elizabeth was scheduled to lay a wreath at the Canadian Cross in Arlington National Cemetery. The Cross is on top of a small rise and can be reached by climbing up about 30 steep stepping stones. An honor guard from each of the services lined both sides of the steps. It had rained that morning and the steps were wet and slippery. The Queen was wearing heels and as she climbed the steps, she slipped a few times, however, when she was right in front of me, she slipped and lost her balance. Without thinking, I stepped forward and placed my left hand under her elbow to steady her. The British equivalent of the Secret Service was immediately all over me. They pushed me aside as they steadied the Queen and started back up the steps. Her Majesty, The Queen of England turned and, smiling warmly said, "Thank You Young Man!" What a tremendous thrill for a 21 year old Sergeant of Marines. The Queen and the Prince would also lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, but my platoon hadn't been assigned to that detail.

In honor of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, the British Embassy hosted a gala ball. The embassy invited all the British subjects residing in Washington, DC and surrounding Virginia and Maryland. There was a large number of college students, most of whom were young ladies. To ensure an adequate number of dance partners for the ladies, the embassy requested that each of the service ceremonial units provide a

certain number of single, young men. We were required to wear our dress uniforms and were cautioned several times on what was considered appropriate behavior. It turned out to be a wonderful party. The young ladies were a lot of fun, the food was great, the music acceptable for dancing close and the punch, non-alcoholic. Hell, three out of four isn't bad!

Being assigned as escorts for embassy functions was fairly common and it was considered a choice detail. Personally, I know of no incidents of misconduct to occur at one of these functions. However, many plans for future dates were made.

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I had been dating a young woman that I met in the 1630 Club after one of the Friday evening parades. Her name was Dee (Maridee) Baker and she was a native of Washington. Her family lived in Chevy Chase and her dad was a photographer for the "STAR," a Washington newspaper. He had been a navy photographer during WW II and had taken some very famous photos. Dee enjoyed dancing and we had some great times. I don't know why, but it seemed like everyone at the Barracks was getting married. Before I knew it, Dee and I were getting married in Maryland. We were married on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1956 by a Justice of the Peace. She was only 17 and still a senior in high school, but she quit school and we got an apartment. Her family wasn't overjoyed, but they liked me and her dad kept telling me how much money we saved him by eloping. Money was tight and we struggled to make ends meet in Washington, DC, on a sergeant's pay. The wedding bliss faded quickly and we argued over money, her pets and her sloppy housekeeping. Before, or shortly after our first anniversary, we would separate.

### **EISENHOWER'S SECOND INAUGURAL PARADE - JANUARY 1957**

I felt honored to be participating in President Eisenhower's second inaugural parade. I can't remember much about it, other than it was very long and, very cold. We were wearing white cotton gloves and they weren't much protection against the cold, even though we were wearing at least two or three pair. They didn't keep our hands warm and, most definitely made execution of the manual of arms extremely difficult. We would march in a "Massed Company" formation, three platoons side by side, in column. At best, an unwieldy formation, but when you added trolley tracks in the middle of Pennsylvania Ave. and slippery paving bricks, it became treacherous, especially with the metal cleats on the bottom of our shoes. Our hands and feet would actually ache from the cold. When we got on the warm busses for the trip back to the barracks, the dull ache turned into needles of sharp pain, as hands and feet thawed. It had been exciting to participate in an event such as the Inaugural Parade, but as I sat on the bus and felt my face, hands and feet return to normal, it became just another detail, on a long list of completed details. It seemed to take more and more to impress

me.

For this very reason, after only one parade season, the majority of those assigned to Ceremonial Guard Company were transferred to other duty assignments. The solemnness that accompanied your first dozen funerals in Arlington, or the awe you felt when you first saw the President of the United States, or foreign dignitaries such as Queen Elizabeth, was soon lost. You never intentionally botched a funeral, or any other detail for that matter, but eventually, the mistakes didn't bother you as much. Each year in the fall, new Marines from Camp Lejeune would be selected for duty at the Barracks and the cycle started all over again. The Marines selected for retention at the Barracks would form the nucleus of the new platoons. Preparations for the next parade season began immediately.

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1957 would bring many changes to the little community known as Marine Barracks, Eighth and Eye Streets, SE, Washington, DC. Respected, easy-going Colonel "Whiskey Willie" Williams was relieved by a regulation, hard-nosed Colonel named, Leonard F . Chapman, who later became Commandant of the Marine Corps. GySgt Bunce was relieved by GySgt Dwight Faylor and SSgt Robert Capeci became the platoon sergeant for the newly formed fourth platoon. I was assigned to the fourth platoon with Capeci and a newly arrived officer, Lieutenant Ernie Savoy. Lt Savoy, SSgt Capeci and I made a good team. We worked well together and our platoon in 1957 was a very cohesive unit with few, if any, discipline problems. The company became officially known as Ceremonial Guard Company and the Sunset Parade (5:30 pm) would give way to the Evening Parade (9:00 pm), which would be performed under floodlights. Band Hall chairs were replaced with bleachers.

The change from a sunset parade to an evening parade created several problems. First and foremost, it inconvenienced about 200 Marines, including me. Instead of being finished at 1930 and going on liberty, we wouldn't be finished until 2230. This made for a long day, because everything started at the same time, it just ended later. Secondly, a system for lighting the parade field had to be devised. Today, it is a very sophisticated lighting system, but in 1957 it consisted of flood lights hanging in the trees by ropes or chains. Many additional rehearsals were required to perfect the lighting of the various units in the parade . . . more troop inconvenience . . . no big deal! The lighting, on a warm summer evening, brought a plethora of winged creatures to feast on our flesh and drink our blood. At times, there were so many bugs swirling around the lights, it almost looked like it was snowing. At least the mosquitos feasted on officer blood as well as enlisted blood. This was a small consolation, but it helped make it bearable. I don't know why, but the bug situation diminished and eventually it didn't appear to be a problem at all. Lastly, under the lights, any buttons, buckles or leather that wasn't shined, became very noticeable. In the afternoon, these

things weren't noticeable and we could get away with less preparation. By 1958, the evening parade had become one of Washington's leading tourist attractions. The number of spectators grew quickly, probably due to the cooler evenings and a later starting time. The chairs from the band hall were replaced with bleachers in order to accommodate the additional spectators. Today I reservations are required, and it is worth the effort, if you are in Washington, DC, between May and October. It is nice to know that I participated in the very first evening parade and now it has become a major tourist attraction . . . BUT . . . in 1957-58, a major pain in the butt.

One might ask, "What prompted the change to an evening parade?" I can't verify this information, but the story that circulated seemed reasonable. On Friday evening, during the parade season, the Commandant of the Marine Corps hosted a garden party for the elite of Washington society. His guests would attend the sunset parade and then proceed to the Commandant's house for the garden party. They would stay too long and General Randolph McCall Pate conferred with Colonel Chapman about a possible solution, such as conducting the parades at a later time. If that was possible, then he could have his garden party before the parade, and while the guests watched the parade, his stewards would clear away the food, drinks and tables. After the parade, the guests would be ushered out the gates onto 8th Street, where they could be picked up by their drivers. Colonel Chapman acknowledged this suggestion and had his staff work out the logistics for conducting a parade at 2030, and thus, the evening parade was born. Like most new things, we complained a lot, but in the end we all enjoyed the evening parades much more. The evening air was a little cooler and we didn't sweat quite as much, also, when we went on liberty at a later time, our funds lasted a little longer. We endured all of these changes and inconveniences, just to accommodate the Commandant's guests at the weekly garden party and all we could do was watch from a distance. Though elite troops, we weren't society elite.

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Late in 1957, Dee and I would separate. I moved back to the barracks and she went to her parent's home. However, in a very short time, she had moved in with a policeman she was dating. Several months into our separation, I was summoned to the Company Gunnery Sergeant's office. I knocked and was told to enter by GySgt Faylor. I entered and noticed he was reading a newspaper. He looked up at me and with his ever present scowl, asked, "What is your wife's first name?" I replied, "Dee." He then asked, "Maridee E. Burton?" I answered, " Yes gunny, what did she do?" His scowl got more intense as he folded the newspaper. When the paper was folded to his satisfaction, he flipped it in my direction and stated, "Your wife was shot in the neck by her cop boy friend. She's in critical condition AND don't ask for any time off, because I know you don't love her!"

I stood there dumbfounded. True! Dee and I had our problems, but she was still my wife, at least legally. I honestly didn't know if what I felt was love, or hate, but I was concerned for her. Gunny Faylor then told me to call Mr. Elkwood Baker, my father-in-law, but wouldn't let me use his phone. I left the office and proceeded to a pay phone where I called Dee's dad. He thanked me for calling and told me that since Dee and I were still legally married, they had moved her to Bethesda Naval Hospital. Her treatment would be long and expensive and she didn't have any other medical coverage. I readily agreed to this and told him I would visit after work.

I visited Dee that evening. She looked pretty bad and my heart went out to her. Tubes and wires were everywhere and monitoring equipment beeped and ticked on both sides of the bed. She recognized me and held out her hand, which I took in mine and squeezed it gently. Our visit was necessarily short, as she dozed off repeatedly. Her condition was critical. Small fragments of bone were scattered throughout her neck as a result of the gunshot and they had to be constantly monitored. She would recover, but there would be partial paralysis on one side of her body and a loss of feeling on the opposite side. She had no feeling of hot or cold on her right side. As I left the hospital, one of the nurses pulled me aside and pointed out the cop who had shot her. He had no desire to meet me and I definitely felt it would be better if I left the hospital quickly. A few days later my platoon rotated to Camp David for our two weeks of peace and quiet. I really needed some time away.

While at Camp David, two police detectives visited me and wanted to know where I had been for the last 24 hours. Fortunately, all the log entries were in my handwriting and there were at least 30 people that would swear to my presence at Camp David. It seems that the cop had a small, no make that a serious mishap, while leaving Bethesda Naval Hospital. He had visited Dee, which he did everyday, and somewhere between the hospital and his automobile, he had a serious accident. As dawn broke and it got lighter, someone found the cop lying on his back in the bushes. He had two black eyes, a broken nose, several broken ribs, numerous cuts, abrasions and contusions over most of his body. A gold Marine Corps Emblem had been pounded into his chest. It's easy to see why I was the prime suspect, but unfortunately, I didn't have the pleasure of inflicting this pain on the cop. I never discovered who I had to thank for retaliating on my behalf and personally, I felt it would be better if I never found out. Dee refused to press charges and the whole episode became another footnote in my life story. Little did I know, but Dee would re-enter my life on two more occasions, once in 1961 and then again in 1964.

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As a ceremonial showplace, the Marine Barracks received it's share of visiting military units from foreign countries, especially Great Britain. I cannot recall the actual month or year of these visits, but during my tour of duty, the BLACK WATCH, the



GRENADIER GUARDS and the ROYAL MARINES all visited the Barracks. Their visits were really great and we enjoyed performing with them. Many lifelong friendships were formed.

## **VISITS BY FOREIGN MILITARY UNITS**

### **THE ROYAL HIGHLANDERS, BLACK WATCH**

Her Majesty's Royal Highlander, Black Watch Band and Pipes, was on a tour of American cities. Before their return to Scotland, they visited the Marine Barracks and participated in an evening parade. What a thrill for the spectators that evening. The Black Watch performed magnificently and believe me, the Marines had to really put a lot of effort into matching their performance. It was perhaps the most entertaining and flawless parade I participated in, and that's saying a lot. All the parades were excellent, but this one was special. Everyone tried harder, gave a little extra and performed at a level of excellence that I hadn't observed before that evening.

As I recall, the Black Watch spent a week or more at the Barracks. I formed a close friendship with Black Watch member, Tony Richardson, who had just been promoted to Corporal, after twelve years of service to the Crown. In contrast, I had only been a Marine for five years and was a Sergeant for two of them. My wife Dee and I were still together at the time of the Black Watch visit, because Tony spent a lot of time at our apartment. He marveled at the size of our place and the quality of the furniture and appliances we had. The pay in the British armed forces didn't allow for such a plush existence. He thought "we lived well and we felt that we barely got by. Another example of Americans not appreciating what we have.

During his visit, Tony gave me a Black Watch emblem as a way of thanking me for my hospitality. He explained why this particular emblem was special. It was a badge that was being phased out of service. On the face of the badge, it proclaimed, "**The, Royal Highlanders ... Black Watch!**" The new badges removed the words **Black Watch** and substituted, "**49<sup>th</sup> Regiment**" He didn't appreciate the change and went on to explain another reason why this particular emblem was special. The Black Watch had served in Kenya during the struggle against the "MAU MAU." The Mau Mau was a terrorist organization, whose membership was mainly from the Kikuyu tribe. The uprising lasted for almost four years, 1952-1956. The Mau Mau brutality in trying to coerce other Kikuyu into joining them, caused a civil war and led to the Mau Mau undoing. Tony had served there and this was the emblem he had worn on his cap during the uprising. This emblem is very special to me and I've kept it in a place of honor with my other Marine memorabilia. Tony and I exchanged letters and Christmas cards for many years, but eventually the time between letters grew longer and eventually they simply stopped.

There was many an item of uniform or equipment swapped, as we “Yanks” were taught the proper way to wear the kilt and other regalia of the Black Watch uniform. Compared to this uniform, our dress blues would be considered comfortable. We shared some truly memorable nights of drinking in the “1630 Club.” This was a favorite hangout for the Scotsmen, because of the inexpensive beer, snacks and sandwiches. Of course, they didn't object to the dozens of young ladies that usually hung out in the club and the young women seemed to be fascinated with the Scotsmen in, or out, of their kilts. They didn't think much of our American beer and claimed it was little more than colored water. To give it more of a punch, they put 3 to 4 drops of brass polish in each glass of beer; The brass polish of choice was **Brasso** We had never seen this particular polish in the U .S. and we bought all they would sell or trade. It was a very good brass polish, as well as a beer enhancer. The PX officer ordered several cases from England and it became a mainstay. Today you can find it in any store that sells metal polish. I have not been without a can of **Brasso** since the Black Watch visit in 1957!

### **HER MAJESTY'S ROYAL MARINES**

The British aircraft carrier, H.M.S. Ark Royal was berthed in Norfolk, Virginia and a contingent of Royal Marines (RM) were bused to the Barracks for a short visit. The Royal Marines weren't with us long enough to participate in a parade and for the most part, their visit wasn't very exciting. Only two things stand out in my memory. The first took place in the Barrack's barber shop, located in the basement, near the “1630 Club.”

For the most part, the British troops wore their hair longer than we did. It was close around the ears but quite long on top. Several Royal Marines had paid a visit to the Barrack's barber shop and they requested a marine-type flattop. I went to the barber shop for my weekly haircut and sat down next to four Royal Marines. They were in the process of discussing how great it would be to wear their hair like U .S. Marines, when all hell broke loose. The RM Sergeant Major burst into the barber shop, did the little hop the British do, smashed his heavy shoes down into the position of attention and snapped his swagger stick up into his armpit. He stood, chin up, shoulders back, thumbs along the seam of his trousers and in a very loud, authoritative voice stated, “Lads, I brought you here looking like proper Englishmen and by all that's holy, I'll take you back looking like Englishmen. There'll be no more of these ‘Yank’ haircuts DO YOU UNDERSTAND?” The Royal Marines had jumped to their feet and assumed a very rigid position of attention. This was done immediately upon the Sergeant Major's entry into the doorway of the barber shop. Not one of them moved and they listened attentively to his instructions. When asked if they understood, they replied in unison, “AYE, SERGEANT MAJOR!” They executed a precise facing movement and literally marched at “Quick Step,” as they exited the barber shop. They marched in a column, arms swinging at shoulder level and when

they cleared the doorway, the Sergeant Major turned toward the barber and said, "You'll not be giving anymore 'Yank' haircuts to my lads . . . is that clear, sir?" The barber nodded and uttered a weak, "Yes." The Sergeant Major pivoted and marched off briskly. I was greatly impressed with their discipline and military bearing. I admired them and secretly longed to be more like them, that our Marines, would be more like them.

On the day they were returning to Norfolk, they were formed in ranks and their officer inspected them. He summoned the Sergeant major and appeared angry. I couldn't hear what he was saying, but he was angry, in a refined way. The Sergeant Major took over and in a very loud voice, said, "When I dismiss you, remove the 'Yank' emblems from your tunics and put on proper badges." When several men told him that they didn't have any RM badges, that they had swapped badges with the Yanks, he nearly lost it. He ordered them to find the Yanks and return with proper badges, a Globe and Laurel, not a Yank Globe and Anchor. There was a lot of swapping back and forth, but a number of Royal Marines had to return without the correct badge. The Sergeant Major was livid, but they had to board the buses for the trip back to Norfolk. He let them know, in very clear and certain terms, that the incident wasn't over. He turned and reported to the Captain and they left the Barracks compound in a column, men without RM Badges ten paces to the rear . There was little doubt that these men would have a very rough time over the next few days, or even weeks. We never learned what happened after their return to the ship, but our imaginations ran wild.

### **HER MAJESTY'S GRENADIER GUARDS**

The last unit to visit the Barracks during my tour of duty, was Her Majesty's Grenadier Guards. An excellent ceremonial unit that we enjoyed performing with. Personally, I never quite enjoyed any of our visitors as much as the Black Watch. Their visit was longer and became more personal. However, I would like to share one story of the Grenadier Guard's visit. I was assigned as the Sergeant of the Guard and as I made one of my required tours of the barracks squadbays, I walked through the squadbay which the Grenadier Guards were using. As I proceeded down the center aisle, heels clicking on the highly polished deck. I stopped suddenly! There on a bunk . . . in plain view . . . was one of their bayonets. They were superior to ours and I thought it would make a great souvenir. Moving quickly, I picked up the bayonet and stuck it down inside my sock, under my trouser leg. Hastily, I returned to the Sergeant of the Guard's office and hid the bayonet in the bottom desk drawer. About an hour later, a highly distraught Grenadier burst into my office and proclaimed that he had been robbed. Innocently, I inquired as to what he had lost. He replied, "My bayonet, it was lying in the middle of my own bunk and now it's gone, probably stolen by some thieving Yank!!" I was getting a little tired of being referred to as a "Yank" or at times a "Colonial." I felt a little guilty, but I wasn't giving up my bayonet . . . not then . . . not ever!

I summoned the Corporal of the Guard and told him to wake the off-duty watch. He asked why and I told him about the bayonet being stolen. We organized a search of the barracks and questioned everyone we encountered. Nobody had seen anything unusual and I told the Grenadier that this was a waste of time. Whoever took the bayonet was long gone by now. He reluctantly agreed and I secured the search. There was a lot of grumbling from the off-duty watch. They had to get up in about an hour and assume the guard. If they knew that I had the "missing" bayonet all this time, they would've really been pissed off. The Grenadier was upset and he reported the loss to his officer, who reported the loss to the Barracks' Commanding Officer. All hands were mustered in a parade formation and we were told to turn in the bayonet. If the bayonet was turned in there would be no disciplinary action taken, it would be considered an inter-service prank. Not on your life! That bayonet was mine, and mine it would stay. After a period of time, the formation was dismissed and Colonel Chapman apologized to the Grenadier Officer, on behalf of the assembled Marines. It would be years later, before I told anyone about how I acquired the Grenadier Guard bayonet, on display in my den. I still have it and yes, at times I feel a little guilty about taking it and the inconvenience I caused for a lot of people, however, I'm not inclined to return it.

A Navy chaplain, who was a Catholic priest, put it best. With a smile on his face, he declared in his heavy Irish brogue, "Marines have a very loose sense of personal property!" He would usually add, "Marines are part angel, part devil, but always a Marine! Yes, I love them in spite of their small touches of larceny . . . larceny . . . that they seem to take such pride in."

### **EARLY SUMMER . . . 1958**

#### **INTERMENT OF THE UNKNOWNNS OF WORLD W AR II AND KOREA**

As the summer of 1958 began, the weather began to warm up and the Barracks was once again in a state of turmoil. The beginning of the parade season was fast approaching and a sense of urgency seemed to permeate every facet of our existence. Every available moment was filled with rehearsals. uniform fittings and equipment preparation. Sometime during this period, SSgt Bob Capeci was transferred to Hawaii and I assumed the position of platoon sergeant for the 4th platoon. In the midst of all that was happening, we were alerted to a very important detail, a detail that would stretch our limited manpower to the breaking point. Only Presidential security would take priority. Unknown Dead from World War II and the Korean War were to be interred in the Unknown Soldier's Tomb. This Tomb is located in Arlington National Cemetery and at this time, contained only one Unknown, a soldier from World War I.

The Army's "Old Guard Regiment" was designated as the coordinating service and preparations began immediately at Fort Meyer, Arlington, Virginia. This

ceremony would receive national, if not world wide coverage and perfection was the goal. There were several different, but coordinated events that had to be covered. I was assigned to the detail that would provide a "Guard of Honor" for our Unknown Dead as they lay in state within the Capitol's Rotunda. Each detail consisted of five men, one from each of the services, including the Coast Guard. The Guard of Honor would watch over the Unknown Dead for three days. This duty required a two hour session in the position of Attention or Parade Rest, both of which require bodies locked in position, without movement. The Army felt that we needed to practice being miserable, therefore, practice sessions began in earnest. We practiced in the attic of one of the army barracks, where the heat and humidity were brutal. The Army insisted this was necessary to prepare us for duty as sentries in the Capitol Rotunda. Army intelligence must have figured this out, because the Capitol Rotunda was air conditioned to a point of being too cold, especially during the night watch, which I was part of. All in all, the rehearsals went well and we felt very confident in our ability to dazzle the public with our "snap, crackle and pop!"

As we stood in a very rigid position of Attention, uniforms and equipment spotless and brass gleaming, thousands of spectators walked past the Unknown Dead and paid their respects. Their mood was somber and respectful and the first time the guard detail changed from the position of Attention to Parade rest, they were startled. A change of position was needed to keep the blood circulating and thus prevent men from passing out. When I felt a change was necessary for my detail, I would snap my sword up against my shoulder and snap into a rigid position of Parade Rest, left hand in the small of my back and heels at shoulder width. When moving my left foot, I slammed my cleated shoe onto the marble floor which resulted in a loud ". . . CRACK!" The other four men would then count to themselves, "one . . . and . . . HUT . . . ," and the position was changed with precision and a very loud "CRACK" . . . as four cleated shoes slammed onto the marble floor. The sound was amplified inside the Rotunda and spectators, caught unaware, jumped, as we smiled to ourselves.

The last phase consisted of moving the caskets of the Unknown Dead to Arlington National Cemetery. The Guard of Honor lined the Capitol steps as the caskets were moved by a joint services body bearer detail. Waiting at the bottom of the steps were massed company formations from each service. With a lot of fanfare, the caskets were loaded onto the horse drawn artillery caissons for the long ride to the Unknown Soldier's Tomb. The massed companies would accompany the caissons to the Tomb.

This entailed a march of about five miles under a hot sun, executing the manual of arms as they proceeded along the funeral route. The troops did a splendid job until they reached the amphitheater behind the Tomb. After a short ceremony, the Unknown Dead were moved to the Tomb for burial and the massed companies were given the command of "REST!" The companies, including the Marines, disintegrated!

Only the first several ranks remained upright. More than three-quarters of the men either sat down, fell down or, in some cases, actually passed out. The long hot march, in parade formation, had taken its toll. The busses were moved to the site and several ambulances arrived for the more serious cases of heat exhaustion. However, not one photograph of this ever appeared in the newspaper or other publications. In 1958, the news media didn't look for ways to embarrass the military, or the government. This detail, like all those before it, was now a footnote in the history of the United States. It was an honor to participate, especially as a member of the Guard of Honor in the Capitol Rotunda. I received a "Meritorious Mast" from the Barracks Commanding Officer, Colonel Chapman, a future Commandant of the Marine Corps.

### **ANECDOTES FROM CAMP DAVID**

For the most part, the parade season of 1958 doesn't conjure up any vivid memories of spectacular ceremonies or humorous funerals. After participating in two previous parade seasons, everything seemed to be a repetition of what had happened before. I knew that my time at Marine Barracks, Washington, DC would soon end and in many ways I would miss this exciting tour of duty but, there had to be other adventures waiting for me to experience as a Marine. Little did I know, that another 12 months of ceremonial duty lay ahead of me. The two week rotation to Camp David was a welcome break and I would like to relate a few humorous tales from atop Catocin Mountain, Camp David's location.

The Presidential motorcades from Washington, DC were a thing of the past. I understand this would change under President Kennedy but, President Eisenhower liked to use helicopters for the 80 mile trip. In fact, when President Eisenhower visited his farm in Gettysburg, he traveled there by helicopter and then the copters would proceed to Camp David to await his return. This served two purposes. First, it was a faster, safer way to transport the President. Secondly, it would provide helicopter support to our reaction force at Camp David. This way, we could respond to an incident at the farm without having Marines billeted there. The President liked to maintain the farm's rural atmosphere.

It was a dark rainy night and the President's helicopters were tied down on the Camp David landing pad. There was always at least one sentry assigned to the helicopters. Due to the darkness of this rainy, windy night, I had posted two sentries for better security. In the wee hours of the morning I made one of my unscheduled visits to the posted sentries. I was immediately challenged by one of the sentries and after identifying myself, I inquired as to the whereabouts of the other Marine. He indicated that he hadn't seen him for some time. Fearing a breach of security, I contacted the guard shack and requested a four man reaction team. Meanwhile, I moved cautiously among the helicopters searching for my missing sentry. Alas, a clue! I heard a faint sound of snoring coming from behind a partially open hatch on the

President's personal helicopter. I slid the door open very quietly and there, in a deep sleep was my sentry. His muddy boots had soiled the deep pile carpeting and were currently resting on one of the plush captain's chairs in the main cabin. I reached in, and without disturbing him, I removed his loaded rifle. I placed my whistle near his ear and let go with a shrill blast. Startled, he tried to get up but his legs had gone to sleep. He thrashed around and tried to find his rifle. I screamed, "I ought to kill your sorry ass and blame it on an intruder!" He panicked, and amid a flow of tears, pleaded for his life. He begged me for another chance and I felt sorry for him. He had humiliated himself in front of me and seemed pretty remorseful. I gave him until daylight to have the inside of the helicopter spotlessly clean. If he did a very good job, he would stay in the platoon and, if not, he was history! I don't know how he did it, but the interior of the helicopter was immaculate by his deadline. He stayed and was one of my most loyal Marines. I've never regretted my action that rainy night on Catoctin Mountain. He proved to me that I had made the right decision.

While the helicopters were located at Camp David, Sgt Croghan and myself invited the crew chief, Sgt Castleberry to share our quarters. They were getting ready to leave the mountain and as Sgt Castleberry was walking up the path to the pad, I called out, "I hope you crash and burn." It was done in jest, but he didn't see it that way. He disappeared thru the trees and we heard the helicopter engines cough to life and soon the rotors were spinning rapidly. Castleberry's bird lifted off the ground and began to bank to the left for a run down the contour of the mountain. Without warning, it sputtered and the engine quit. The helicopter fell into the trees and started a fire. Fortunately, all three crew members got out unhurt. Croghan and I stood there with a shocked look on our face. Suddenly, down through the trees came Castleberry. He was swinging a large tree branch and screaming as he ran towards me. I immediately took off through the trees at a fast pace. I gradually put some distance between us, but I could still hear him behind me. Eventually, we were both exhausted and sat down, breathing heavily. I think I apologized and he must have accepted, because we remained friends and believe me, I never joked like that again. As they say, "All's well, that ends well!" Amen, to that!

During the last year or so, a lot of construction was being done at Camp David. A communications tower had been built of heavily reinforced steel and concrete and we were told it would survive a direct hit from an atomic bomb. In the event of a nuclear holocaust, the President's image could be broadcast to all corners of the world to reassure our allies. I'm sure glad it was never tested. They built underground quarters for all the Marines, Sailors and Soldiers, but I don't remember ever moving into them. Throughout my time at Camp David we continued to live in the small cabins above ground. One evening, Sgt Gary Bennett and I traveled to Fredricksburg, MD for an evening of drinking and dancing. Bennett was driving his 1958 black chevy convertible. It was late at night and we were heading back to Camp David, speeding along a small country highway. Gary kept glancing at his rearview mirror and said,

“There's a car behind us and he's been there a while, probably a State Trooper.” He then indicated that I should look for a place to turn off the road when we topped the small rise ahead of us. We topped the rise and before us was a large road block. Three or four police cars, with roof lights flashing, stretched across the road. State Troopers were waving flashlights back and forth. Gary hit the brakes hard and we slid sideways up to the roadblock. The car rocked to a stop and smoke rose from around the tires. The smell of burnt rubber permeated the air. Troopers with drawn guns approached the car and had us get out. We were placed against the car and frisked. Bennett was handcuffed and taken to a police unit. As former Marines, they allowed me to take the car back to Camp David. I was told to return the next day for Bennett's hearing before a magistrate and to bring lots of money. Upon arriving back at Camp David, I awakened Lt Ernie Savoy and explained Bennett's predicament. He and I were present at the hearing. Sgt Gary Bennett stood at attention before a high court bench. The Magistrate looked down at him with a scowl on his face. In a deep wavering voice, he declared, “Sgt Bennett, this is the most flagrant violation of the speed laws of the Sovereign State of Maryland to ever come before this bench!” I leaned over to Lt Savoy and whispered, “We need more Money!” I was right, we needed twice what we had. Lt Savoy paid the fine out of his own pocket and the platoon would take up a collection to repay him. The platoon eventually collected from Gary. I never asked how fast we were going and I don't think I wanted to know.

In an effort to add a little excitement to the boredom of guarding Camp David when the President wasn't there, Sgt Croghan and I devised an incentive plan for sentries. While they were posted sentries, if we could get close enough to touch them without being challenged, they were assigned a weekend of guard duty. However, if they spotted one of us and challenged, they received a 72 hour pass. Croghan and I would dress in dark outfits and camouflage our faces. At times, we spent an hour or more working our way toward the sentry. We patiently used the shadows from trees or buildings created by the moonlight. We were extremely careful, these sentries were armed with loaded weapons and they wanted that liberty pass. The lodges were very rustic and had many nooks and crannies along the porch or patio. All entrances were recessed and offered excellent concealment. Croghan and I became quite proficient at our little game of hide and seek and awarded very few liberty passes and we sure enjoyed scaring the hell out of the sentries. On one occasion, I managed to reach the servant's entrance along the patio and concealed myself within the shadows. The sentry was making his rounds, but he must have been daydreaming, because I reached out and touched his arm and said, “BOO!” He stumbled backwards as he attempted to get the M-1 rifle off his shoulder. In panic, he tripped and accidentally discharged his rifle into the air. I quickly calmed him down and took the weapon from him. I had really scared him and we took a break from our game. The sentries were too eager and I felt the game had become overly dangerous. I had enjoyed the stealth and patience required to get close to the sentries. It was a great game and it taught me skills which would be useful in a place called, Vietnam. Little did I know that only eight years



would pass before the game was for real, the stakes higher my own life or that of the men for whom I would be responsible. If I hadn't learned these lessons, perhaps I wouldn't be writing my life story.

One last story about Camp David. With all the construction going on, there were hundreds of cardboard boxes taken to the dump for burning. One day, as Sgt Croghan and I drove the jeep around the compound, we saw a very large pile of boxes that had not been burned yet. We immediately saw an opportunity for a little fun. We got out of the jeep and began stacking the boxes higher and higher. We got back in the jeep and drove up the road about 100 yards or so, and turned around. We gunned the engine and popped the clutch. We were off . . . we hurtled down the road toward the pile of cardboard boxes and as we plowed into them, cardboard flew everywhere and we were screaming. All of a sudden, we were airborne off the edge of the dump and when we hit the soft ground, we buried the wheels up to the axles. We had a long walk back to the billeting area, where we quietly "borrowed" the Naval Officer's carryall and retrieved our jeep. Somehow, nobody was ever the wiser and that was our first, and last, crash into and thru the boxes. This wasn't a very mature example for the troops, but, they didn't find out about it and Croghan and I had a lot of fun doing it.

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The big event of 1958 would involve security for President Eisenhower. The President would travel to Newport, Rhode Island, to attend the Yacht Race known as "The America's Cup." The Presidential Security Detail would consist of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ceremonial Guard Platoon, my platoon. However, due to the size and complexity of the assignment, we were augmented with other "security cleared" Marines from the DC/Virginia area. My platoon would work closely with the U.S. Secret Service and provide the interior security details. The augmenting troops would serve on the outer perimeter. This Presidential Security Detail would be a highlight of my three years with Ceremonial Guard Company. It was a detail that would provide a lifetime of memories, one of which was serving as an orderly to President Eisenhower.

### **PRESIDENT EISENHOWER VISITS NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND**

With little or no advance warning, I was alerted to prepare my platoon for movement to the Naval Base at Newport, Rhode Island. The only thing we knew at the time was that the President would be observing a yacht race called, "The America's Cup." My platoon would provide security details as directed by the U.S. Secret Service. The platoon commander, Lt Ernie Savoy, couldn't provide much more information. Very few details were being offered for obvious security reasons. As we boarded aircraft for the movement to New England, we didn't even know if the President's stay would be one or two weeks, or for that matter, how long we would be there. We had packed for two weeks and hoped for one week.

Upon arrival, we found that we would be billeted in an area known as Fort Adams, which was part of, or adjacent to, the Naval Base. Quarters One at Fort Adams was the residence of an Admiral who commanded major Navy units utilizing the Naval Base. I've always thought it was quite a coincidence that the Admiral would be on annual leave, at the very same time that President Eisenhower would be using Quarters One as his residence. Obviously, rank and position . . . DOES . . . have its privileges! Quarters One was a large, older style home typically found in New England. It was two or more stories with a very steep pitch on the roof. Gables and "ginger-bread" woodwork were everywhere. A large porch covered the front of the house, with smaller porches at each of the other entries. It was freshly painted a light gray with white trim, in fact, the paint was so fresh you could still smell it. The President couldn't reside in a house with dull, peeling paint . . . could he?

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An advance contingent of Secret Service agents and the Marines arrived a few days ahead of the presidential party. Working together, guard posts were established and lines of communication verified and tested. Marines assigned to the Presidential Security Detail took over the Gate House at the entrance to Fort Adams. Traffic into and out of the base would be closely monitored and curtailed where possible. Several days after the President had arrived, a humorous incident would take place at this gate involving the Marine on duty and the press corps. The Secret Service, on a particular afternoon, had informed us that the President didn't want to be bothered by the press and Fort Adams was closed to all nonessential traffic. All sentry posts were alerted and the young Marines hoped that a nosey member of the news media would attempt to get near the President. A few did, but fortunately, none were shot. Between the young Marines looking for excitement and some hard-nosed Secret Service agents, they would soon regret their trespasses.

A good friend of mine, Sgt Jim Donovan, was assigned to the gate on the day when the press was denied entry. A caravan of approximately six automobiles pulled up to the gate and were halted by Donovan. All of the vehicles were occupied by members of the press corps and he informed them that they would not be permitted to pass, as per the Secret Service. A self-appointed spokesman got out of the lead vehicle and began to argue with Donovan. Words like "First amendment," "free speech" and "the right of the people to know" were tossed about, but Donovan, a tough Irishman, wouldn't budge. He was smug in the righteousness of obeying orders from the Secret Service, and ultimately, from "Ike" himself. The spokesman finally informed Donovan that JIM HAGGERTY, the White House Press Secretary, had told them they could enter Fort Adams and photograph the President going about his daily routine. He signaled the caravan to proceed. Big mistake!

Donovan had enough and he lifted the flap on his holster. As he began to

remove the .45 Cal automatic pistol from the holster, he very firmly informed them that, "JIM HAGGERTY may have said you can . . . BUT . . . JIM DONOVAN says you can't!" The spokesman became verbally abusive and Donovan cleared his holster and drew the slide to the rear, releasing it and thus chambering a live round. His loaded weapon was leveled in the direction of the spokesman, who immediately began waving his arms and yelling for them to back up and turn around, which they quickly complied with. There would be no entry today. In the battle of the JIM's, Donovan had won. Over the years I've heard this story retold in various forms. In one he shoots out a tire and in another he fires thru the windshield of the lead vehicle and in the most outrageous one, he fires at the feet of the press spokesman. Not so! Donovan stood firm, and the press corps retreated.

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During the few days before the President arrived, some of the Secret Service agents and the Marines went on liberty together. Many friendships had been formed during the long stays at Camp David, but we didn't normally travel in the same social circles. I don't think we actually went into the city of Newport, but rather, we found a terrific little place next to a large inlet or bay. There were many small boats tied up to rustic old piers. Our favorite place was a night club that featured cold beer, seafood and a large dance floor. The club sat out near the end of a large pier and was a really neat place to hang out. The word spread fast that the Marines with the Presidential Party were going there and the place soon filled up with young women. The name of the place escapes me, as do any of the specifics of our visits. I can remember meeting some very pretty young women and having a wonderful time dancing with them. My memory seems to recall that many of them were nurses, or nursing students. As the evenings progressed, long romantic walks along the many rustic piers, with a young lady for company, became common place. It was a beautiful place, especially at night with the moon reflecting along the water. It always made me think of a New England postcard and I thought that someday I would revisit this place, but I never did. On a lighter side, many of the disagreements over the women ended up with one of the locals going for a swim off the end of the pier. Fortunately, they were good swimmers, but they stopped coming to the club until after we left.

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The White House Staff and the Secret Service had taken over an entire headquarters (HQ) building. Both the President and the First Lady had offices in the building and our guard office was located there. Late one evening, as I made my rounds, I saw a shadow. move along the wall at the top of the stairs. All of the offices were closed, except those of the Secret Service and the Marine Guard. No one should have been on that floor at this hour. I immediately notified the duty agent by phone and proceeded up the staircase. Upon reaching the top step, I peered around the

corner and observed a man putting his ear up to each door along the hallway. He would then try the door knob and move to the next door. I wondered how he got there. Two agents arrived quickly and I filled them in on our intruder. The agents recognized him as a reporter and began walking down the hall. When he saw them, he tried to run, but there was nowhere to go. I was positioned at the only exit and he darted back and forth trying doors at random. They were all locked and he began to panic. The agents finally backed him into a corner and took him into custody. They manhandled him to the top of the stairs and shoved him. He bounced and rolled toward the bottom and when he got there, two more agents dragged him to the main entrance and tossed him bodily down the concrete steps leading to the driveway. He lay still for a while then gradually got up and staggered off. We learned that he had hidden in a storage room until the offices were empty. The Marine who was responsible for ensuring that everyone that checked in, also checked out, was severely reprimanded by me and given a "Special Naval Assignment." Every morning he was responsible for shining the brass ship's bell on the flagpole, the 20 feet of brass railings up the front steps and both of the 36 inch tall brass shell casings, which flanked the main entrance. In the damp night air of New England, these brass items tarnished very badly, very quickly. The Marine spent most of his off duty time working on the brass and, believe me, he was much more diligent in the days ahead. Had "Ike" been in the building, this entire scenario would've been played differently and someone may have been badly hurt, or even imprisoned. The news media was a constant source of aggravation, a real pain.

Photographers were always attempting to get a candid shot of "Ike," especially one that wasn't very flattering or even one that was actually embarrassing. On several occasions, the Secret Service had to get rough, but I was always amazed at their restraint. We only got involved once in a while, this struggle with the media was an everyday occurrence for the agents. One incident stands out. I was the Sergeant of the Guard and about 0300 (3am) I got a call from the Marine sentry on a side porch of Quarters One, the President's residence. He informed me that he had a suspicious object in a tree just over the wall surrounding the quarters. He thought it might be a photographer . . . BUT . . . it could be a sniper. The trees had begun to shed their leaves and he could make out the person's form in the moonlight and there was a hint of breathing in the cold night air. I notified the Agent on Duty and he requested that I meet him at the porch. The air was very cold and under my breath, I cursed out whoever was in that tree. It was three in the morning, and I was very cold. Little did the person in the tree know, but I hoped it was someone I could shoot . . . Damn, but it was cold! The Agent and I arrived about the same time and the sentry pointed out the suspicious shape in the tree. There wasn't much doubt that it was a person, but, what was their intention? The Agent and I proceeded to the base of the tree through a gate in the wall. He told me to have my weapon in my hand ready to cover him, while he tried to talk the person out of the tree. The person in the tree had so many clothes on that he was a shapeless blob, but we could make out two cameras hanging around his

neck. He refused to leave the tree and the Agent threatened to climb up after him and with a tinge of disappointment, I sensed that there was no threat to us and reluctantly, I holstered my .45 automatic. The photographer started to go higher in the tree as the Agent started to climb. He reached a point where the branches were too thin and they began to bend down toward the ground. He tried to climb back and lost his footing. Down he came through the branches, with a series of "THUDS" as he bounced off some of the larger ones. Each thud evoked a grunt or a groan and eventually he crashed into the cold, hard ground with a "WHOOSH" of air from his lungs. I placed my knee on his neck and kept him quiet until the Agent climbed down. The Agent was not gentle with our interloper, who turned out to be a free lance photographer for a weekly scandal sheet, like the kind found at the grocery store check-out line. Any roll of film he carried was immediately exposed and his two cameras were impounded. His ego was a little trampled on, his body bruised, his film exposed and his cameras impounded . . . BUT . . . the President's privacy was undisturbed. I felt a sense of satisfaction, but silently wished that he had tried to run, or at least tried to resist the confiscation. He had been smart and didn't resist, but Damn, it was cold in the wee hours of this New England morning!

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Everything had settled into a comfortable routine and no major crisis had occurred. The morning before "Ike" was to observe the actual yacht race, we were informed that he would observe from aboard the U.S.S. MITSCHER (DDL-2), a new class of warship that was designated as a Frigate. A Frigate was not authorized a Marine Detachment, therefore my platoon was tasked with providing orderlies for the President during his stay aboard the U.S.S. MITSCHER. I was summoned by the Officer in Charge of the security detail and upon arrival at his office, found several colonels, a navy captain and Mr. Rowley waiting for me. Remember, he was head of the Secret Service White House detail. I was briefed on the orderly assignment and asked for input. I recommended two Marines, one on duty and one backup and was told that I would be one of them and a good friend, another sergeant, would be the other. He was a "poster perfect" Marine at 6' 4" tall, wide shoulders and narrow waist . . . BUT . . . he was extremely rigid in the execution of his duties, almost to a fault. I chose not to comment, one way or another, unless the brass asked for my humble opinion. I rationalized my choice by thinking, "In case of trouble, he would be a good man to have along, big and stubborn!" After all, what could happen on a U.S. Naval warship, off the coast of Rhode Island?

### **ABOARD THE U.S.S. MITSCHER (DDL-2)**

I positioned myself at the bottom of the ship's gangway and awaited the President's arrival. The other sergeant would have the backup shift and was waiting in a small cabin aboard the MITSCHER which had been made available for any

additional Secret Service agents and the two of us. The Presidential limos arrived and amid a flurry of activity, "Ike" departed the limo and proceeded toward the gangway, flanked by numerous agents and other VIP's. As he approached me, I snapped to ATTENTION and saluted as smartly as I knew how. I said, "Good Morning, Mr. President!" To my utter amazement, he returned my salute and pushing thru a crowd of VIPs, stopped directly in front of me. He inquired, "You're Sgt Burton, aren't you?" I quickly acknowledged that I was, totally amazed, that he remembered me after several brief encounters at Camp David. Mr. Rowley informed him that I would serve as his Orderly aboard the MITSCHER. He thanked me and started up the gangway. I pivoted smartly and followed closely behind him. Mr. Rowley gave me a "thumbs-up" and the entire entourage moved up the gangway to the MITSCHER's quarterdeck, where the President was "Piped Aboard" in the traditional Navy manner. However, the normal young officer or petty officer "Side Boys," had been replaced with eight Navy Four-Strippers (Captain). We eventually ended up on a small deck near the bridge, which was crowded with senior Senators, Congressmen, Generals and Admirals. They immediately began to press in toward the President, each wanting to engage him in conversation and Mr. Rowley gestured to move them back and told me to keep them back, thus ensuring that the President had plenty of breathing room.

I started out by asking them to move back in a very polite manner, but they didn't respond. I quickly stretched out my arms and started forcefully pushing them back, disregarding their rank or position. If they resisted, I pushed harder. It was a real high imposing my will . . . OK . . . Mr. Rowley's will, upon these big shot VIPs. I soon had plenty of empty- space around the President and became aware of some hateful looks. I had stepped on a few toes and ruffled some feathers. Too bad! I took up a position near the President and remained alert to any need he may have. I was handed a pair of large naval binoculars and told that they were for "Ike." At times, he would hold out his hand and I would give him the binoculars. He would watch the racing yachts for a short time and then hand them back to me. On one occasion, he had separated himself from the other spectators and he asked me if I was enjoying the race. I indicated that it wasn't very exciting and he smiled and told me he was a farm boy from Kansas, that boat racing wasn't his thing. He returned to the rest of the spectators and I marveled at the friendliness he had shown toward me, a mere sergeant among all these very important people. However, that was Eisenhower. He always treated the enlisted men with respect, while acting in a way that reminded the Flag Officers (Generals and Admirals), that he was the Commander in Chief. He could put them in their place without a word, it only took a certain look. After all, he was the President of the United States, the most powerful man in the free world and, the Commander in Chief of the world's most awesome military!

Eisenhower was deeply engrossed in conversation, when an Admiral asked if he might use the binoculars. I informed him that they were for the President's use. He said, "I'll stand right next to you and you can have them if the President wants them."

I reluctantly agreed and handed him the glasses. As he put them up to his eyes, Eisenhower turned toward me and held out his hand. Oh my God! I turned to the Admiral and ripped the binoculars from his grasp and handed them to the President, who was smiling in a friendly way at my predicament. He took the glasses and turned to watch the race. The Admiral looked at me and asked, "What would you have done if I had placed the strap around my neck?" Without hesitation, I informed him that he would be dangling from the glasses the President was now holding. He laughed and moved back to the spectators. Eisenhower, still smiling, turned and handed me the binoculars. I think he enjoyed the incident and never again requested the glasses, nor did anyone else . . . thankfully!

A refreshment table had been set up on the deck and Ike and some close friends moved over to the table. The President stood there talking and eating potato chips. I stood there and watched the crumbs from the chips falling on his Harris Tweed sport coat. It seemed strange to see this powerful man doing something that we all do, eating lowly potato chips. He turned suddenly and asked if I would pour him a glass of Coca-Cola. As I poured the drink, he said, "Sgt. Burton, it's very warm, pour one for yourself." I was taken by surprise and replied, "But, Mr. President, I'm on duty." Without hesitation he stated, "I'm the Commander in Chief, I give you permission." Needless to say, I poured a small amount in a glass and drank it in one swallow, but I was truly uncomfortable.

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Several hours had passed and the warm sun began to take it's toll on Eisenhower. Mr. Rowley told me that the President would be taking a nap in the Captain's "At-Sea" cabin near where we were. I followed the President and saw him safely into the cabin. I took up a position in front of the closed hatch and Mr. Rowley gave me my orders. His exact words were, "Nobody will be allowed to disturb Eisenhower." I acknowledged the orders and indicated I understood them. He left to rejoin the party and I awaited my relief by the other sergeant. The President was asleep . . . what could happen? The other sergeant relieved me and I passed on the orders from Mr. Rowley, verbatim! The other sergeant assumed the position of PARADE REST in front of the cabin door. Ike was safe . . . wasn't he? I proceeded to our assigned cabin and took off my white gloves, pistol belt and holster, then unhooked the snaps on the high collar of my blue blouse (coat). I stretched a little trying to relieve the stiffness I felt in my back and neck. When you carry a loaded weapon on your hip for a while, you get stiff from adjusting your stance to offset the added weight on one side. Just as I poured a glass of water, the speaker in the cabin crackled to life and I heard, "Sgt Burton, get up here and relieve your replacement, NOW!" I quickly re-hooked my collar and while climbing the ladderwell, I replaced my pistol belt and weapon. I flew through the hatch not knowing what to expect. Was the President being attacked? There had been no gunfire or explosions . . . my

imagination went into overdrive. There was the other sergeant, at a rigid position of ATTENTION, heels together, thumbs along the trouser seams and he kept replying to Mr. Rowley's shaking finger. “. . . Yes, sir . . . No, sir . . . Never again, sir!” Rowley was furious and he sent the other Sergeant away and turning toward me, he said, “That man is an absolute idiot. Who assigned him to this job?” I rightfully assumed that this was a rhetorical question and kept my mouth shut. Mr. Rowley began to relate what had happened. It seems that Mamie (Mrs. Eisenhower) had wanted to check on Ike. As she approached the hatch where the sergeant was standing, he snapped to ATTENTION and saluted the First Lady, acknowledging her by name and then returning to a rigid PARADE REST. He was blocking her entry into the cabin where Ike was napping. The First Lady became very insistent, but he said, “His orders were that nobody could disturb the President . . . AND . . . YOU'RE NOBODY!” Oh No! I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Surely, he wouldn't do something like that, or would he? I wondered if I should have spoken up about my reservations about him. It was way too late for that, especially judging by Mr. Rowley's red face and obvious anger. He asked me what I would've done in the same situation and I replied that I would have allowed her access: What else could I say? The answer to his question was obvious, but to this day, I'm not sure what I would've done. I definitely would not have called the First Lady, nobody . . . BUT . . . the orders were explicit . . . NOBODY WILL DISTURB EISENHOWER. I've always been thankful that it was him, and not me on duty. It really surprised me that he didn't get transferred after that episode, but, all he did was follow his orders to the letter, and obviously, those in charge realized it.

The day finally ended without mishap and the President returned to Fort Adams. For us it was back to the routine of four on and eight off. The President had enjoyed having a Marine orderly and there would be several other details for me. It never ceased to amaze me when he greeted me by name. Not only was he the President of the United States, but he had been a General of the Army, five stars, but what impressed me most, was the fact that he had been the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe. He had led the Allies in the defeat of Hitler's vaunted Third Reich. Standing next to him was like stepping back into history AND. . . he knew my name! Yes, I was impressed!

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Before we left Newport, the Naval Aide to the President, Captain E. P. Aeronaut USN, had requested that we perform the Silent Drill for the Eisenhower and their guests. The drill would be performed on the large lawn in front of Quarters One. I arranged to have my men replaced on the guard detail so that we could rehearse the drill routine a couple of times before our performance before the President. The actual performance went off without a hitch and President Eisenhower took the time to personally thank the Marines of the Silent Drill Team, my Marines.



The Presidential Security Detail in Newport, Rhode Island came to an end. We returned to Washington, DC just as the Parade Season of 1958 was coming to an end. Sometime during 1958, Colonel Chapman was promoted to Brigadier General and was replaced by Colonel Jonas M. Platt. Lieutenant Savoy was replaced by Lieutenant Stewart and late in the year, I was promoted to Staff Sergeant and a request was submitted to HQMC to retain me for another year. At the time, I didn't realize that a major change was being planned and I was to be part of it. During the winter of 1958-59, Lt Stewart, Sgt Croghan and myself were sent to Camp Lejuene to screen and select the new Marines for the 4th Platoon. While at Camp Lejuene, I looked up my brother Jerry who was stationed there with the 2nd Marine division. He had just finished tours of duty with the Marine detachments aboard the U.S.S. NEW JERSEY and the U.S.S. TICONDEROGA. After traveling around the world, duty at Camp Lejuene was pretty depressing, but he had less than a year to do on his enlistment. Our visit was short, but very enjoyable. Our selections were completed and we returned to Washington, DC. When our new Marines arrived, we took them to MCB Quantico, Virginia. We were involved in trying out a new method of preparing the platoon for the upcoming parade season. We would use the empty barracks at the Officer's Basic School, which would give us an extremely large parade deck on which to teach and perfect our silent drill routine. Overall, it worked very well for my platoon, but I have no idea if it continued. The command at Quantico didn't appreciate us. Personally, I think there was a degree of jealousy involved.

### **MARINE CORPS SCHOOLS, QUANTICO, VIRGINIA . . . EARLY SPRING, 1959**

This was a period before the summer session of the Platoon Leaders Class (PLC) would begin. During the summer months, this area of Quantico was full of college students attending the mandatory summer sessions in their junior and senior years. If they were successful, they would be commissioned 2nd Lieutenants upon graduation from college and return as officers to complete the Officer's Basic Course. However, at this time of the year, the barracks and the gigantic parade deck were empty. Someone had the brilliant idea that the newly selected platoons destined for Ceremonial Guard Company could use this space to advantage. The freshly seeded parade deck at the Marine Barracks was always off limits and we could even allow the young kids, that live in the area around the Barracks, to use their own playground. Best of all, the new Marines wouldn't need to be bused to Quantico for the issue of Dress Blue Uniforms and the subsequent fittings usually required. It was a great idea and overall it worked out very well. There were several administrative problems that occurred, but nothing insurmountable. As a "bastard outfit," we had to beg a lot and eat a lot of crow, but the new platoon progressed rapidly. No one from the Barracks bothered us and Ed Croghan and I turned out the finest platoon we ever had. Ed was a genius at coming up with some very intricate movements for our drill routine. Intricate in appearance,

but reasonably simple to execute. In fact, many of the movements we perfected during that spring in Quantico, are still in use today. I helped, but Ed was the choreographer, the creative genius behind the most successful platoon we had. Ed and I had been together since November 1955. As we prepared to move back to the Barracks in Washington, DC, I would like to relate one interesting story from our stay in Quantico.

While we were selecting the Marines for this platoon at Camp Lejuene, one prospect stood out. He met all the prerequisites, but we were hesitant to select him. He had a very famous father and we wondered what kind of problems that would create for us. In a sense of adventure, we decided to select James F. Cagney, Jr. Yes, his father was none other than James F. Cagney, the "Yankee Doodle" movie star. "Jimmy Junior" turned out to be a real disappointment. He just didn't fit in with the rest of the platoon and quickly became a constant source of irritation. At one point, the troops gave him a GI shower because he didn't bathe regularly. His locker and bunk were always a mess and he was even a social dud. None of the other men wanted to take him on liberty with them and it got so bad, that he actually had to pay them for the privilege of tagging along. After taking his money and then making him pay for everything, they normally figured out a way to lose him. I felt bad about what was going on and submitted his name as one of the regular administrative drops. He would simply be reassigned somewhere at Quantico, with no adverse marks in his Service Record Book. It didn't go quite that smoothly. I submitted his name, along with several others and waited for their orders to be issued. Instead, I was summoned to report to my CO. Upon arrival, I was introduced to several colonels from HQMC and at least one from MCB Quantico. There was one person in the office that needed no introduction. Sitting off to one side was James F. Cagney. He had a full head of pure white hair and was wearing a very expensive looking overcoat made of Camel Hair. He stood up to shake my hand and I was taken back by how short he was in real life. He was always such a tough guy in the movies and his size took me by surprise. I never enjoyed his movies as much after that meeting. I was asked why I had requested a transfer for Mr. Cagney's son. I chose my words carefully, but presented my case. Out of consideration for Mr. Cagney, I kept my remarks vague and very general. Basically, I told them he was not emotionally suited for this assignment and that he was disruptive to the discipline and good order of the platoon. I explained the many hours of working closely together during the chaotic months of the parade season and stated that James Junior didn't fit in. He always seemed to be at odds with the rest of the platoon. He managed to create a situation of "Him Against Them," which was unacceptable. The term "Politically Correct" wasn't yet fashionable, but I was a good example of how it worked. Standing up, Mr. Cagney thanked me and explained how he had hoped this assignment would make a man of his son. He had been spoiled and was obviously a big disappointment to his father. I was asked if I could make an exception and keep the son in my platoon. I wavered a little as I thought of the trials and tribulations of the parade season ahead and politely said, "No Sir, in my opinion, that would be a mistake!" I was dismissed and James F. Cagney Jr. was transferred

along with my other "Drops." The best part was actually meeting tough guy, James F. Cagney.

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My platoon had finished its training period in Quantico and now we returned to the normal routine of ceremonies, funerals, dignitary arrivals/departures and the parades. Some of the ceremonial platoons were now living in Building #58 at the Naval Gun Factory, about four blocks further down 8th Street. I was told that HQMC had denied the request to retain me at the Barracks for another parade season. I knew it was time to go, but I realized that I would miss this exciting duty. HQMC had denied the request because of my promotion to Staff Sergeant. Career wise, it was felt that I needed to spend some time in my occupational specialty, the infantry. I was told why they had requested my extension. The days of each of the ceremonial platoons being a silent drill team were now ending. There would be only one Silent Drill Team to represent the Marine Corps and I had been slated to be the Platoon Sergeant. I felt honored to have been considered for this prestigious assignment, however it was not to be. When I was asked who I would recommend for the assignment, without the slightest hesitation, I said, "Sgt Ed Croghan."

Ed was given the drill team and carte blanche on the men in Ceremonial Guard Company. He kept many of the young men we had just trained, got rid of any he had doubts about and, then selected the best men he knew in the other platoons. A new era had begun in the most capable hands of Sergeant Ed Croghan. After all these years, Ed and I still communicate through e-mail and an occasional phone call. He is an ordained minister in Webb City, Missouri.

My last days in Washington are a blur. My estranged wife, Maridee contacted me and hinted at us getting back together. It wasn't something that appealed to me at this time and I quietly took my orders and prepared to depart for California. I was assigned to the 1st Marine Division, for further deployment to Okinawa. I would leave the Barracks, that had been my home for the past three and a half years, sometime during May or June of 1959.

### **PARTING ANECDOTES FROM MARINE BARRACKS, "EIGHTH and EYE"**

In the preceding pages I have attempted to recreate the wonderful experience that was part of being in Ceremonial Guard Company, Marine Barracks, 8th and I Streets SE, Washington, DC. I cannot think of a duty station in the Marine Corps, that compares, even in the slightest, with this assignment. However, many of the memories associated with this unique place have little to do with the ceremonial aspects of the barracks. Some of my most vivid memories involve events and people that I came in contact with.

You'll never hear about the high-stakes poker game that took place in the basement of the Commandant's house. Many a Guard Co. Marine wrangled an invitation to play, but they all met the same fate, they were lucky if they only lost the money from one payday. The Commandant's stewards ran the game and several civilians were regulars. They all seemed to have unlimited funds and quickly bought the pots until the Marine was broke. There was one local woman named Mary that ran a small café across the street from the barracks. Rumors had her owning most of the buildings on 8th street and she was always good for a loan, until payday. It wasn't a smart move to not pay her on time.

There was also the story of the prostitute that had a rare blood disease and needed a total exchange of blood every six months or so. The Marines at the barracks would volunteer to donate the blood and she offered her special services at no cost to those men, Had the Marines not donated the blood, she would've died. I'm proud to say that the blood was donated with no strings attached. She was a neat lady and we liked her.

One of the men in my first platoon became a loner and acted a little strange. He started carrying a weapon, usually a knife, when he left the barracks. One day we learned that he had murdered a homosexual by strangulation. He had strangled him with a pink pillowcase. A large cardboard cutout of Marilyn Monroe was found at the foot of the bed. He had received a sentence of 20 years and was in the process of an appeal. Several of the men from our platoon, including myself, received a subpoena to appear as character witnesses by the defense attorney. He wanted to prove his client was crazy and get him out of jail. One of the local prostitutes, a girl named Amy was also called as a witness. She went out and bought a new Kelly green dress and white shoes, purse, gloves and hat. She only planned on one day, but it went on for over a week. She wore the same outfit each and every day. One of the Marines named Minehan, would flip a coin with Amy to see who would buy lunch. He would say, "Heads I win . . . tails you lose" and flip the coin. As you might figure, Amy bought lunch every day. I've always wondered if she was really that dumb, or if she did it because of the crush she had on Minehan. During the trial, it came out that when Edmunds was about 10 years old, his father blew his mother's head apart with a shotgun. Edmunds had been sitting on his mother's lap at the time. No wonder he was a little strange. The District Attorney only asked me one question. He asked, "Would you say Edmunds was crazy?" I really thought he was, but I answered, "I'm not a doctor and wouldn't know, but he acted different than the others in the platoon." Edmunds lost his appeal and we never heard of him again.

Late at night, those on duty in the guard office used to answer the phone by saying, "Marine Barracks, Home of the Brave, One of the Heroes Speaking, May I help you?" One night, I heard my Corporal of the Guard answer the phone in that manner. He immediately jumped to his feet and stood at rigid ATTENTION. He started saying,

"No, Sir . . . Never again, Sir. Yes, Sir . . . I'm sorry, Sir!" He hung up the phone and sat down, his face aspen. I inquired as to who was on the phone. He answered, "The Commandant!"

The NCOIC of the barrack's maintenance section had been there for 20 years or more. He was MSgt Sterling and I never saw him in anything but utilities (fatigues), at least until Col. Chapman arrived. He walked to work and wore a plaid shirt under his utility jacket. He always carried a leather briefcase, but the only thing in it was his lunch, usually a sandwich. The story has it that he was at the barracks when they switched from gas lighting to electricity. He memorized the schematics and then destroyed them. He had been transferred several times . . . BUT . . . when they had an electrical problem, nobody could fix it without the plans. MSgt Sterling was finally called back to the barracks and there he stayed. During Colonel Chapman's reign, he forced Sterling to get into dress blues and participate in a parade. When he showed up with his medals on, nobody knew what most of them represented. He had medals for service in what were known as the "Banana Wars," Haiti, Nicaragua and some others we never figured out. He was a legend at the barracks and I wouldn't be surprised if he had died there.

Colonel Leonard F. Chapman was a source of many stories, but this one always made me laugh. On one of his regular inspection tours around the barracks, he stopped in SSgt McKenzie's squad bay. He stood there stretching his neck and slapping his swagger stick against his leg. He was staring at the platoon's floor buffer sitting on its stand. The stand looked like a low bench with the buffer brushes hanging on the upright section. Chapman told McKenzie's lieutenant that the buffer didn't look like an 8th & I buffer. It wasn't ceremonial. He left them with the job of making the buffer more ceremonial. The lieutenant looked at McKenzie and asked, "What does a ceremonial buffer look like?" Mac didn't know, but turned the task over to his troops. They took the buffer to MSgt Sterling and asked for his help. As they scraped years of paint and old wax off the motor housing, they discovered that the housing was chrome with a 6 " x 6 " brass plate on the front. They immediately began to polish the whole thing and then one of them came up with a set of white walled tires. Next came a set of white handle grips with scarlet and gold (USMC colors) streamers hanging from them. The overall image was definitely that of a ceremonial buffer. It looked like it was doing 100 mph, just sitting still. On the next inspection, Col. Chapman stopped, looked at the buffer, stretched his neck and slapped his leg with his swagger stick. All he said was, "Beautiful, Beautiful." A memo was soon circulated directing that all of the buffers would be made to look ceremonial. It was his way of having us direct our anger at him and not each other . . . it worked!

When Col Chapman was inspecting us for the final time, he stopped in front of me and said, "Sgt Burton, you are not regulation, but you are a very sharp Marine." That was a big compliment from Chapman. He was a tough man and demanded much

from us.

During the Silent Drill Routine, even today, they perform an inspection and execute what is called the “mirrored rifles.” These movements are a real crowd pleaser and I can remember when they began. During the late 1950's, men like Croghan, Juneau, Leas and Tolson were perfecting it. Who actually originated this movement is unknown to me and over the years there have been minor changes, but the basics have stood the test of time.

One night in the center garret, which served as the sergeant's quarters, we were entertaining a rather drunk young lady of questionable morals. Lt. Ernie Savoy, the Officer of the Day, heard about it and proceeded toward the sergeant's quarters. We were warned and tied the young lady into a rope, that served as a fire escape and lowered her out the window. We tied off the rope on the radiator under the window. We were on the third floor and she was dangling outside. Lt. Savoy questioned us and then walked around the quarters. He saw the rope tied in a crude slipknot to the radiator and casually walked over and jerked the knot loose. The still night air was pierced by the shrill scream of the drunken young lady as she fell toward the sidewalk. The slack was taken up quickly and her fall was brought to a sudden stop, then she was slowly lowered to the street. The only thing that saved her from being badly hurt was the fact she was so drunk and loose. The only thing that saved us was that Ernie Savoy was an understanding officer. Nobody was hurt, no harm was done. He told us to get her safely home and that we had used up our “stupid” excuses. We did as he directed and the young lady thanked us for a truly fun and exciting evening. The next day her armpits were chafed and quite sore where the rope had been tied. We never did anything quite that stupid again . . . not quite . . . but close.

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I left Washington, DC on a Greyhound bus and headed for Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where I would visit my family before heading to California. The trip was uneventful and I dozed off. During the six or more hours between Washington and Pittsburgh, I relived the last 40 plus months of my life. There was no doubt that I would miss 8<sup>th</sup> & I.

HEADQUARTERS  
Marine Barracks  
Washington 3, D. C.

10:PEL:mcr  
P15  
22 June 1958

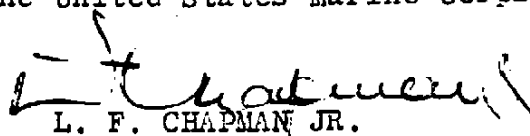
From: Commanding Officer  
To: Sergeant Ronald R. BURTON 1333617/0369 USMC

Subj: Meritorious Mast

Ref: Paragraph 20058, Marine Corps Manual

1. The Commanding Officer, Marine Barracks Washington, D.C. takes pleasure in awarding you MERITORIOUS MAST for outstanding performance of duty as set forth herein.

During the period 28 to 30 May 1958, you, by your skilled service, attention to duty, and personal example performed your duties as a member of a Joint Guard of Honor for the interment of the Unknowns of World War II and the Korean War in an outstanding manner. You were selected for this assignment due to your smart appearance and soldierly bearing, and through your performance of duty you contributed immeasurably to the successful fulfillment of the Marine Corps mission in the Interment Ceremony for our Unknown Dead. Your tours of duty as a Sentry in the Capitol rotunda while our Unknowns lay in state created a lasting memory in the minds of the many thousands paying tribute to these Unknowns prior to their final interment and honored rest in Arlington National Cemetery. Your diligence in the accomplishment of your assigned tasks has been in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Marine Corps.

  
L. F. CHAPMAN JR.

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

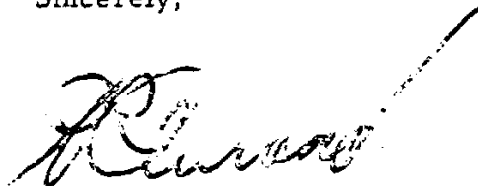
Newport, Rhode Island  
22 September 1958

Dear Burton:

The President has asked me to thank you for serving as his orderly during his trip in the *MITSCHER* last Saturday. He was very impressed with your military bearing and courteous service.

Many thanks and best wishes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'E. P. Aurand', with a long, sweeping flourish extending upwards and to the right.

E. P. AURAND  
Captain, U. S. Navy  
Naval Aide to the President

Sergeant Ronald R. Burton, USMC  
Marine Barracks  
8th & Eye Streets, S. E.  
Washington, D. C.



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Newport, Rhode Island  
20 September 1958

Dear Colonel Platt:

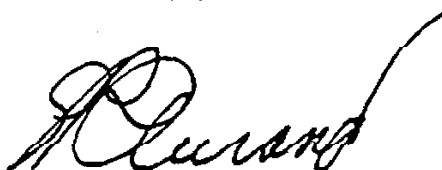
The President and the First Lady have asked me to convey to you their sincere appreciation and gratitude for the security provided them at the Naval Base in Newport and at Fort Adams during their stay here this year. The contingent of Marines from the Marine Barracks, Washington, D. C., has once again demonstrated the faithfulness to duty exemplified by Marines all over the world.

The President and the First Lady also greatly enjoyed the drill which your team performed so magnificently.

The fine service rendered by your officers and men, performed in a courteous manner and with excellent military bearing, has been commented upon most favorably by the Chief of the U. S. Secret Service and also by members of the White House Staff.

With best wishes and warm regard, I am

Sincerely yours,



E. P. AURAND  
Captain, U. S. Navy  
Naval Aide to the President

Colonel Jonas M. Platt, USMC  
Commanding Officer  
Marine Barracks  
Washington, D. C.

Copy to:  
Commandant of the Marine Corps

FIRST ENDORSEMENT on Naval Aide to the President's ltr of 20 Sep 1958

From: Commanding Officer, Marine Barracks, Washington 3, D. C.  
To: Sgt Ronald R. BURTON 1333617/0369 USMC

Subj: Appreciation

Ref: (a) JMC ltr AF-gj of 6 Nov 1958 to CO, MB, Wash, D. C.

1. I take pleasure in endorsing and forwarding to You a copy of the letter from the Naval Aide to the President concerning the services of Marines while providing security for the President and the First Lady at the Naval Base, Newport, R. I. this year.

2. I also take pleasure in conveying the personal appreciation of the Commandant of the Marine Corps in accordance with reference (a).

3. You, as a member of the security guard, through your commendable performance of duty, contributed significantly to the successful accomplishment of the assigned mission.



J. M. PLATT