

The End of the Pre-WW II 8-man "Squads Drill"

I can answer the question as to the end of the pre-WW II "squads drill," as I was at 8th & I at the time (1960-62). CO Col. Platt transferred out and he was replaced by Col. Bailey, serving under Commandant David Shoup. One or both of those men apparently had little or no use for ceremonial Marines, and they made us revert to brown parade shoes, linseed-oiled rifle stocks (had to strip off the Linspeed), regulation gourds, etc. These changes were demoralizing. But the worst part was the elimination of 8-man squad drill.

Sometime prior to the '61 parade season, all units were called out one morning to rehearse two full parades for the new post commander: the first using squad drill; followed immediately with another using the LPM (or FMF) drill designed for 13-man squads. To a man, we decided to make the squad drill absolutely the sharpest we could--and make the LPM movements as sloppy as we dared. Alas, the outcome had been ordained before we set foot upon the parade ground, and LPM became the order of the day. And so, regrettably, it has remained to this day.

During the moonlight parades, the Drill Team's first maneuver was to transition from LPM formation to 8-man squad formation; then they commenced their routine--which (with all due respect, and no prejudice at all) seemed far better than today's.

That fall, during the IG inspection, fully 85% of the barracks enlisted personnel requested mast with the IG, all with the same complaints, centered on the new regs and the elimination of the squads drill and the implementation of LPM drill. Of course, the result was that conditions didn't improve; if anything, they grew worse.

Hope this helps.

S/F,
Steve DeBock

P.S. Considering the precipitous drop in Barracks morale in 1961, the initials FMF could easily stand for something much more colorful than Fleet Marine Force.