



EVENING PARADE AT WASHINGTON MARINE BARRACKS

Washington: The Monks at Eighth and I

LIKE Shakespearean wraiths, liveried figures stalk the night-draped battlements, as drum rolls and trumpets echo to the sound of marching below. "Officers call!" barks the adjutant, and eight black-coated officers, swords tight against their shoulders, wheel in close formation across a floodlit field. "Sound attention!" and they come, the main body of six platoons, surging from beneath a darkened arcade. With all the pomp, panoply and flair that can be mustered, the most brilliantly executed military parade in the U.S. is under way. The spectacle is the weekly Friday-night retreat at the Marine barracks of Washington, D.C.

As European monks sought to preserve the remnants of Western learning during the Dark Ages, so the Marines at the Eighth and I Street barracks, an imposing brick quadrangle in the midst of the city's black ghetto, insist on maintaining the values that were the U.S. military's before it went mad. Here the emphasis, indeed the very *raison d'être*, is the preservation of spit-and-polish discipline. Let the other services allow beer in the barracks or sideburns in the field. Not the Marines, where tough tradition continues to be served. Since 1957, the spring and summer parades at Eighth and I have been an integral part of that mystique.

Only the best in the 212,000-man corps are accepted for duty in the parade squad of 200 enlisted men and eleven officers. Lean and hard, the Marines are mostly over six feet tall, and this year all

are Viet Nam veterans. They practice as much as 16 hours a day before the season begins until each maneuver is letter-perfect. Then they practice some more. "Eighth and I is an exhibition of perfection in standard military formations," says Corps Commandant General Leonard Chapman Jr. "It is all by the book. That is what it is all about."

An estimated 93,000 spectators turn out each summer to watch the Marines perform at the barracks or occasionally, as the two Lima monument in Arlington.

Often there is a dinner party before, held at the home of one of the barracks' resident generals. This evening, General Raymond G. Davis, Assistant Commandant of the Corps, is giving one for Under Secretary of the Navy John Warner. Just before 9 p.m., the dinner guests are escorted to special reserved seats. Suddenly, on the parade deck, the bugler sounds assembly; the sergeant major strides forward to replace him. With the command, "Post!" the parade is under way.

To alternating music from the Marine band, at one end of the field, and the Marine drum and bugle corps, at the other end, the marching companies move in swiftly, line up and fix silver bayonets on their M-1 rifles. They march in quick 30-inch steps, keeping their feet within two inches of the ground in a motion they call "slide and glide." Momentarily, the parade deck is cast into darkness. High on the ramparts of the east barracks, seven red-coated trumpeters, bathed in a floodlight, blow a fanfare.

The musicians of the drum and bugle corps take charge—50 horns and drums sounding and pounding out a rhythm that fills the quadrangle and overflows down I Street. It sets the crowd to humming, singing and banging feet.

Then the Marine Silent Drill Team appears. Ten minutes of movements without commands, every exercise counted out; circles, squares, lines through lines and, finally, one long line of 24 Marines ready for inspection. Sergeant John Marley, the inspector, grabs a presented rifle. He whirls it, twists it, winds it round his shoulders, again and again with baton-twirler precision, and then flings it back. Next the double in spection—also known as "the mirror." Marley exchanges rifles with another Marine, and they repeat the routine, movements perfectly synchronized, rifles beating the air before being flipped back with the same seemingly casual contempt. Marley walks off looking straight ahead. It is the ultimate in precision drill; the crowd loves it and cannot stop clapping.

With the retiring of colors, and taps played from the ramparts, the parade ends. The crowd files out happily; inside, the Marines relax. General Davis is serving cigars and brandy to his guests, while the enlisted men prepare for a late night party in their club. It has, all agree, been a perfect performance. For another week, at least, the traditions of the barracks at Eighth and I are secure.