

Photo by SSGt. Matthew Perez



Photo by SSGt. Richard Odeermann

No one

The grunts who turn in their mud-soaked cammies for dress blues/whites at Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., consider their selection for duty at the Corps' oldest post as an honor. They are the best of the best; the Corps' finest. But, before any Marine takes the field during a Friday Evening Parade, he must first pass 8th and I's "Ceremonial Drill School."

"It's important that we demonstrate the ultimate precision of drill that the Marine Corps is noted for," said SgtMaj. Lonnie R. Sanders, 8th and I Sergeant Major. "In the ceremonies we perform, we represent all Marines and we may be the only Marines some of these spectators will ever see."

During CDS, the Marine's muscles will be formed to handle the 11.2-pound M-1 rifle like it was a feather. He'll learn body discipline, rifle angle and fancy footwork. Timing and drill sequence will be locked in his head. He'll look good, stand proudly and be full of snap and pop.

Ceremonial Drill School is the starting block for every Marine who performs at the "Oldest Post." Each of the barrack's marching companies conducts its own school, holding classes during the winter. The instructors are usually corporals and are as professional in drill as any top-notch DI.

Marines going through CDS drill about 12 hours a day during a training cycle that lasts approximately 15 working days. They must learn quickly and be dedicated to perfection.

"They learn the basics here before they are assigned to a platoon," said Cpl. James Castellone, B Co's top

PFC Michael Dehaven recently graduated from Ceremonial Drill School and will make his public debut during 8th and I's 1987 parade season which begins May 9.

Each year, in the fall, Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., begins its selection of a "few good Marines" for ceremonial duties. The barracks must fill approximately 55 billets in its two marching companies.

"On the average, about one out of every 10 to 12 Marines qualify for ceremonial duties here," said Capt. Glenn Gearhard, A Co executive officer. "For example, on our last screening trip, we looked at a company of about 200 Marines. Only 10 were qualified. After personal interviews, eight were selected."

Factors such as height, weight and military service records are all taken into consideration.

"For ceremonial unity, our marching Marines must be at least 5 feet, 11 inches tall," said Gearhard. "Due to White House clearances, they must be U.S. citizens, have a clean police record and not be involved in the use of illegal drugs."

The next step in the selection process is Service Record Book screening. About four or five are weeded out there. The remaining Marines are then personally interviewed and graded by each member of the screening team.

After the screening is over, the team compares notes and makes its selections. For those Marines who make the grade, the work has just begun. The hours they spent in boot camp drilling will pale by comparison to the demands of 8th and I's precision routine. But when the trumpets blow and they take the field during their first Friday Evening Parade, their chests will swell with pride. To those in the viewing stands these are "The Few...The Proud...The U.S. Marines."

Sgt. C.D. Chambers



drills like 8th & I Marines

instructor and a three-year parade veteran. "Not all of them make it," he said. "Some have to go through another session. When they do make it, there's more work ahead before they are up to par with their veteran peers."

Castellone is part of a three-man instruction team for B Co. This is his fourth platoon of 20 Marines this year and he expects two more platoons before the end of this month. Parade season begins May 9.

Ceremonial drill is much different than the drill that is taught in recruit training. Classes are rigorous and the old "One sir, don't bend the knee, sir," is constantly repeated. Peer pressure is intense.

A Co's chief instructor, Cpl. Mark Maxwell, says the first few days are the toughest. "Most of them wonder how they'll ever make it through. But, after a few days," he said, "they really start getting into it and then it's just a matter of concentration and unending drill."

"I don't put much emphasis on the timing of the drill," said Maxwell, also a three-year veteran. "I concentrate on the movement and form. They'll pick up timing and cadence once they join a platoon."

Maxwell continued, "During the first three or four days, we go over the footwork of ceremonial marching. Then, they graduate to the stationary M-1 rifle manual. When I feel they've mastered that, we'll start putting it all together."

During the next three weeks, the Marines are fitted with dress blues/whites, have cleats put on their shoes and are issued a ceremonial M-1

rifle. Halfway through the course, they learn such movements as fix and unfix bayonets and inspection arms. The instructors agree that these are the most difficult movements to master and many hours are set aside for them. Toward the end of the course, the Marines learn the firing party movements and other special ceremonial drills. On the 15th day, the platoon is put to the crucial test -- final drill in front of the company commander.

After the Marines graduate from CDS, the work doesn't stop, according to Cpl. Steven Snee, a former instructor and now platoon sergeant in A Co. "The new Marines in my platoon practice eight to 10 hours a week on their own. They know the basics, so now they work more on their timing and form. It takes three months to really be in tune with the rest."

Sgt. C.D. Chambers

Marine Barracks 8th&I

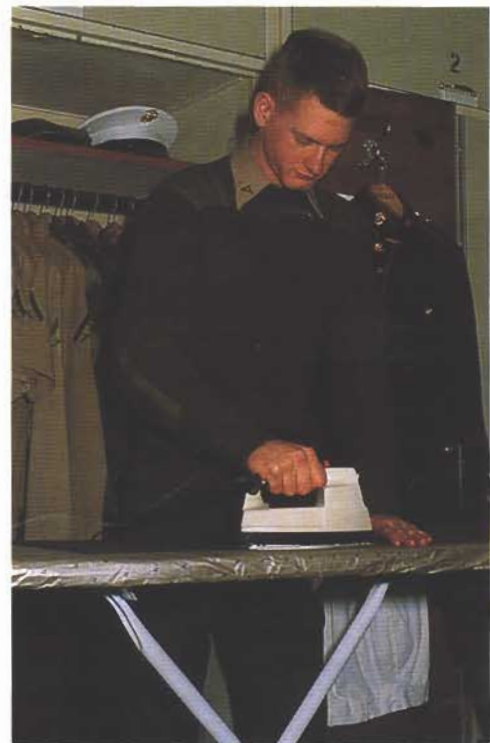


Photo by SSgt. Matthew Perez



Photo by Sgt. C.D. Chambers



LCpl. Christian Howard, B Co, sharpens the creases in his ceremonial white trousers (top). Cpl. Terry Zonker, B Co instructor, adjusts the position of one of his CDS students (above). PFC Michael Dehaven demonstrates the proper sequence of movements in "Fix Bayonets" (left).

Photos by SSgt. Matthew Perez