

Lt Reed

GUARD COMPANY
Marine Barracks
Washington, D. C. 20003

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From: First Lieutenant Robert M. REED 080248/0302 USMC
To: Operations Officer, Marine Barracks, Washington, D. C.
Via: Commanding Officer, Guard Company, Marine Barracks, Washington, D. C.

Subj: Narrative resumé of participation by Barracks Marines in the New York and Norfolk phases of the state funeral for General Douglas MacArthur

1. General MacArthur died at 1439, 5 April 1964. I was notified at home by the Guard Company Duty NCO at 1455. All men assigned to the detail had arrived at Building 58 by 1530. By 1645 we had arrived at the MATS Air Terminal, Andrews, two (2) hours after the General's death. I reported to First Lieutenant SAWTELLE, U. S. Army, OIC of all MDW personnel destined for New York. After waiting for the Coast Guardsmen for nearly an hour, the detail boarded an R-4D at 1700 and taxied to the runway. At 1730 we taxied back to the terminal, debarked, and re-loaded onto a C-54, because of mechanical difficulties with the first aircraft. At approximately 1900, the detail was airborne, 4 hours and 20 minutes after the General's death.

2. Upon landing at LaGuardia Airport, the plane was met by a flashing red lighted escort vehicle, the driver of which asked if "the General's body was aboard," which was the first indication of the lack of preparation in New York, which became increasingly evident as the hours passed. The 40 man detail then loaded itself and all its gear on a 37 passenger Army bus, and proceeded to the 7th Regiment Armory at 66th and Park Avenue, in downtown Manhattan. The MDW detail was reported to Major PAYNE, Officer in Charge of the combined 1st Army/MDW Death Watch effort in the Armory.

3. All enlisted personnel, including Staff-NCOs were billeted on the 5th deck of the Armory in one open gymnasium-like area. Initially, besides being 25 bunks short, there was no organization of this area whatsoever. Sharing the space were approximately 100 men of all services from the New York area. The evening meal, for those fortunate enough to pass by the table at the right time, consisted of sandwiches and coffee.

4. Our first responsibility was to perform a Death Watch demonstration for the 1st Army personnel, and aid in instructing the individual reliefs, which continued until after midnight. During this period, relations were not particularly cordial. 1st Army personnel were sensitive about being corrected, explaining that "We haven't practiced it that way" or "It's not done like that". Some said their units had been practicing for four months. At this stage, we couldn't help but wonder why we were there. MDW participation seemed unwanted and unappreciated.

Fortunately, an agreement was made that MDW would stand the day reliefs and 1st Army the night reliefs, both in the funeral home and the armory. This separation was very successful, and prevented press coverage of some horrible looking troops, from all services. Although not without flaw, MDW participation, particularly that of the Marines and Army, was outstanding in every way, and upheld the high standards established during the President's state funeral.

5. On the morning of the casket's removal from the armory, Barracks Marines participated in a 14 man joint Honor Gorden from the armory steps to the caisson, the forming and conduct of which I had been placed in charge. As soon as the last marching unit had passed by the armory I gave appropriate commands to move the Gorden back inside, thus ending our participation in New York.

6. Briefly, other disconcerting phases of the New York segment were: (1) No hot water in the entire armory until noon of the second day; (2) Head and shower spaces were slimy, cruddy, and inadequate; (3) The armory dining room was condemned by representatives of the Army Surgeon General and was placed off-limits after the first meal caused 20 cases of diarrhea. All further meals were brought in containers from Fort Jay and were good, respectable meals; (4) bayonets were not used, since some New York units had not brought theirs.

7. The entire complexion of the Norfolk phase was everything the New York phase was not. Although many local troops participated as flag bearers, cordons, and marching units, our responsibilities were exclusively MDW organized and operated. Accomodations in the Hotel Monticello were ideal. Each room was shared by two men, and each had its own head. Laundry, dry cleaning and pressing facilities were available in the hotel lobby each morning. Uniforms were done well, and returned promptly the same day. One separate dining room was reserved for death watch standers, making it possible to remove blue blouses while eating. Meal bills were simply signed by each man and returned to the waitress. All hotel employees were exceptionally courteous and eager to schedule their services to our requirements. Each relief departed the hotel 15 minutes prior to posting, marched 2½ blocks to the MacArthur Memorial, waited and made last minute adjustments in the basement boiler room, then proceeded topside to effect the relief. Each old relief marched immediately back to the hotel and up to the 7th floor ballroom, which we used as a ready room.

8. All men were placed on either the day watch, 0800-2000, or night watch, 2000-0800, depending on rank. Most Barracks Marines were able to take advantage of their off-duty hours at least once to explore the glories of Norfolk. At the completion of the final death watch, those men who desired, toured the MacArthur Memorial while the funeral procession marched to the Cathedral.

9. Somehow, all ten Barracks Marines returned to Washington with all the belongings they had left with. No mishaps or incidents of major proportion involving marines occurred at any time. All comments concerning Barracks Marines made by Army personnel in a supervisory capacity were extremely complimentary in nature, and it is felt that inter-service mutual respect was strengthened by the weeks activities in close association with one another.

10. Recommendations:

a. Since many New York personnel of all services are now "seasoned", through much practice and actual participation in Death Watch procedures, it is felt that MDW assistance (with the exception of body bearers and color guard) would be unnecessary in the event of another state funeral in the near future. Our presence actually caused more problems than were solved. On the other hand, troops under the 1st Army Command could not possibly withstand the close scrutiny of public observation.

b. That a check-off list of necessary clothing and equipment be kept by Guard Company units eligible for selection as Death Watch standers, color guards, or body bearers. Such a list proved essential to the MacArthur detail's planning, even though a 2 hour alert posture had been in effect for approximately 2 weeks.

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To: S-3

1. Will accomplish recommendation (b).
2. Since we have no control of situation described in recommendation (a) - no comment.

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