

The Middendorf March Has Many Drummers: Middendorf's Many Drummers

By Henry Mitchell

The Washington Post (1974-); Jul 20, 1974; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Washington Post
pg. F1

The Middendorf March Has Many Drummers

By Henry Mitchell

Only rarely does a Secretary of the Navy or other high official of the government turn out symphonies and stained-glass windows in his spare time, but these hobbies help Secretary J. William Middendorf II relax and see the world fresh after a hard day of admirals.

Last night he was guest of honor at the old Marine Barracks' solemn and touching ceremonial parade, and five of his own compositions were played as the Stars and Stripes came down at the close of the day.

What is more, if they need a window for the chapel, Secretary Middendorf could do that too. If you need a textbook on investment policies of insurance corporations you will find he has written one, and he sometimes paints china plates, and he's quite a baseball pitcher. If all else fails, he can muse on his collection of American prints from 1670 to 1820 or dwell on the etchings of Rembrandt for whom he feels almost a reverence.

"No," said an officer on his staff, "the Secretary did not bake the egg rolls for the reception preceding the parade. He can do anything else but I don't think he can cook. All this sounds as if he isn't running the Navy but he is. He's a very conservative, tough hardnose—with more than one interest."

Two of last night's compositions were having their premieres. All five were marches, and two were dedicated to Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger ("The Secretary of Defense March") and to Mrs. Jouett Shouse, founder of Wolf Trap ("The Wolf Trap March").

"I liked 'The Wolf Trap March' best of all," said Mrs. Shouse. It certainly had more tootletoots and flourishes than the others, and a fine sense of gumption and ginger, if one may venture an opinion. Second in merit, some thought, was the "Brave Marines" march and the secretary said he



By Gerald Martineau—The Washington Post

Col. C. G. Cooper, commanding officer of the Marine Barracks, Secretary of the Navy J. William Middendorf, Gen. Earl E. Anderson, assistant commandant of the Marine Corps, and Mrs. Middendorf at last night's ceremonial parade at which Middendorf's composition, "The Secretary of Defense March" (below) was played.

was well pleased with the performances by the Marine Band. You're always a little nervous at first, he said.

The marches were played as concert pieces before the evening parade. On the front row, looking rather dashing, with shoulder-length black hair, was Somtow Sucharitkul, son of the Thai ambassador to Holland. Secretary Middendorf learned music composition from him when the young man was a music student at Cambridge University.

"Is that who the young man is," said Attorney General William B. Saxbe, sitting nearby. "I didn't think he was a Marine."

Mrs. Saxbe, who said she is much prone to chills during Taps, threw her hands

March #2

Allegro Impetuoso

Trumpet

to her face when the drill team started tossing rifles about, and was relieved that nobody dropped his piece.

"It must be very hard on

the guns," she said when they all hit the ground together for parade rest. She was assured the stocks have plates and hardly feel a

thing. The attorney general, who used to be in the cavalry (at Fort Riley when they still had horses) said it took him back 30 years. Once he commanded a battalion that wished to honor someone with a parade: "It had been ages since we'd had one, and we only had the book to go by—it was not quite like this one."

The Marine Drum and Bugle Corps was the sensation of the parade from the time it started "Scotland the Brave" in lockstep until it brought down the heavens with a fantasia on the tune, "America."

After that, George Washington himself could have cartwheeled down the parade ground and it would

See MIDDENDORF, F2, Col. 1

“Two of last night’s compositions were having their premieres. All five were marches, and two were dedicated to Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger and to Mrs. Jouett Shouse.”

Middendorf’s Many Drummers

MIDDENDORF, *From F1* have seemed an anti-climax. “Fantastic,” said the secretary. “Fantastic.”

“I’m working now on my sixth symphony,” Secretary Middendorf said earlier, “an American Symphony for the Bicentennial. I’m afraid I’m not very modern. For me, at least, it’s a greater discipline to follow the forms of the past.

“My favorite composers are Mozart, Beethoven, Bach, Mahler and—this will shock you—Sousa.

“I know it’s crude and

camp to admire Sousa. I think there is a tendency to downgrade Americans of the past—yes, sort of if they’re ours how can they be all that good.

“I paint, too. On canvas and on china. When I was in Holland (he was ambassador there from 1969 until named undersecretary of the Navy in 1972) I found an old man, Yoet Nicolas, the last real craftsman of the Limburg School of stained glass. I called him up one day and asked if I could study with him and he took me into his studio. I became his last student.

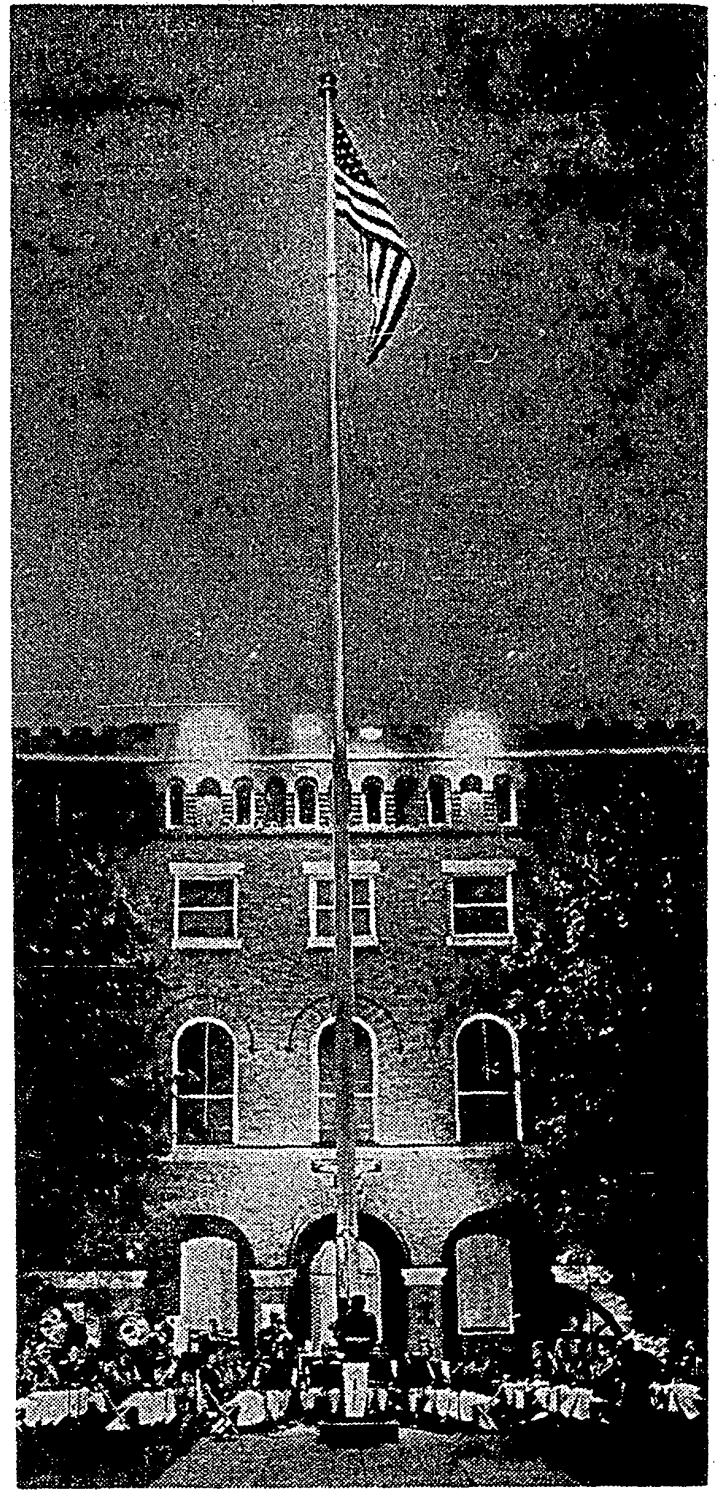
“Together we worked on a window for the Queen’s Church in Delft, and the Anglican Church in the Hague—that one has the four rivers of Paradise and St. Philip baptizing the Ethiopians.”

Middendorf, who is 50, was an investments banker in New York before becoming an ambassador, hence the book on investments.

He also was a baseball freak of note, and was asked to try out for the New York Giants in 1944. (“He’s quite a pitcher,” an aide said). He also found time for the Art Students League in New York, and for literature as well.

“The Dartmouth Library has been breathing down my back,” confessed Middendorf, who is a Harvard graduate. “You know they have that great Robert Frost collection there. I got to know Frost, my wife and I used to visit him in Vermont. I have a complete collection of his printed poetry, and a very substantial collection of his manuscripts.

“As for music, it’s been a revelation for me to write symphonies. (One of them,



By Gerald Martineau—The Washington Post
The U.S. Marine Corps Band performing last night at the Marine Barracks.



Secretary Middendorf listens attentively to the playing of his own music.

the Holland Symphony, was broadcast nationwide in the Netherlands). Folks think these things are difficult—that they could never enter the arts. There are two things you should do, find a fellow in the area who is good and learn from him. Second, don’t be afraid to concentrate intensely. It’s not all that difficult.”

The Secretary lives in McLean with his wife, Isabelle, two sons and three daughters who range from 7 to 19 years of age.

“I’ve been working til 3 in the morning at home on my symphony. Of course there is no time for it during the day. You know, I have a suspicion that everybody, at least everybody with reasonable energy, could find unbelievable opportunities to develop talents. You have to remember plenty of people have done what you want to do.

“Would you excuse me now, I have a briefing on Cyprus.”