



## Walter Reed & Bethesda Hospitals Trip Report

Our trip this month to visit the wounded was Thursday, 21 January 2010. Six of us from the Slattery Detachment made the trip. Marc and I left real early at 0545 as we made a visit to Walter Reed first. The rest of the group left at 0730 and we would all meet up at Bethesda around noon. Here are the Slattery Detachment members who made this month's trip; Marc Purcelli, Eddie Neas, Art Williams, Father Mike Hanly, Jim Heien and Steve Bliss. We all arrived at Bethesda Naval Hospital around 1200, we had lunch with a few of the Occupational & Physical Therapists who take care of the wounded men and women we visit.

Marc and I met Don Patterson at Walter Reed and we were able to visit four Soldiers during our visit. Our first visit was requested by Shirley Parrello a Gold Star mother who made a visit with us a few months ago. She worked with a friend whose nephew had been injured in Afghanistan and was from New Jersey. He had been wounded in both legs by an accidental discharge. We stopped by to say hello to him and his family. He is doing well and has a few additional surgeries and a long road ahead of him during Rehab. He was glad we stopped by and so were his parents. We gave him an Army blanket, Detachment coin, gift cards and a few other items. Don gave him an Army jacket. He really liked it and said thank you. We also gave his mother an application for the Family & Friends for Freedom Fund. They were very grateful and we wished them well as we left. The second soldier we saw was injured in a vehicle accident and had lost his right arm up to the shoulder. Amazingly, he was in good spirits and as I asked him how he felt. He said, "GOOD". He then motioned his hand across his neck and said, "It very easily could have been here". I can't make this up. Almost everyone we see in various states of being wounded or injured always has something positive to say about what has happened to them. We then headed over to see a young Soldier who was with the 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment and had to return from Afghanistan as he has been diagnosed with a form of cancer. He told me and Marc this was not the way he wanted to come back home. He is currently undergoing some type of Chemo treatment. We passed out the items to him and wished him well and told him we would see him next month when we returned.

The last Soldier we saw was wounded in Afghanistan. We met him and his fiancé at the Malonge house. This is a place is where the wounded go who are on an outpatient status and do not need 24 hour care at the hospital. We were asked to visit this soldier by a retired Marine Corps LtCol as he is the uncle of the Soldiers fiancé. Of course we said, "Yes Sir" and followed orders. They were from Texas and would be getting married in the coming months. They appreciated that we took to time to meet with him and he received all of the stuff we give out to everyone we visit.

Three of the four Soldiers we saw were in the hospital for reasons other than being wounded in combat. It makes no difference to us and we do not pick and choose who we visit or do we care how or why they are in the hospital. They all deserve our praise and support for wearing the uniform of one of the Armed Forces of our country while they recover from their wounds or injuries. OOH RAH.....

Marc, Don and I headed over to Bethesda to meet with the rest of the guys from the Detachment. We arrived at noon and headed down to get some chow before we started our visit.

The first Marine we visited was the Sergeant Major of 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 10<sup>th</sup> Marines. He was wounded when he stepped on an IED in Afghanistan in December. He lost both legs in the explosion and also received wounds to both arms. There is a story behind this Marine. This past Saturday a Marine from Westwood, NJ was buried who was killed in Afghanistan on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January. His name was Sgt Hrbek and he is the Marine who saved the Sergeant's Major life when he was wounded back in December. The Sergeant Major was in good spirits as we talked to him and his family. He has a tough road ahead of him as he recovers from his wounds. We gave him the Marine Corps Blanket along with all of the other items and as we opened up the blanket to show him he smiled and said, "I was looking for a background to take a picture with and I now have it." The Commandant of the Marine Corps would be by later to present him with his Purple Heart.

I asked him what was in his future and without thinking about what to say, he said, "I expect to be down at Camp Lejeune in June to welcome my Battalion back from Afghanistan". OOH RAH.....His wife and son were in the room and they had to leave, shall I say in a hurry. I would find out later that she wanted to get their son a haircut before the Commandant came by. No, he was not a Marine, but he was going to be squared away when the Commandant came by. We wished him well, said Semper FI and left to visit the rest of the wounded.

We split into two groups Art, Father Mike and Steve took one side of the floor and Jim, Marc and I the other. We were able to see five Marines that were on the floor and one Navy Doctor who was in the Hospital to have his appendix removed. He was not happy being on the floor and when we did walk in, he said, "I am no Hero". I said, "No problem, you were in a bed, so we are going to stop by and say hello anyway". We chatted for awhile, gave him a Detachment coin and told him to take care of the Marines when he got out of the Hospital. He said he would and thanked us for stopping by.

The first Marine Marc and I saw was from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Combat Engineer Battalion and was attached to 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> Marines. He had been wounded in Afghanistan and his family was there from Boston, Mass. His mother, father, brother and sister were all in the room. We talked for a while and found out that his brother was a Sergeant and his sister a L/Cpl in the Corps. We gave him and his family the Marine Corps blanket, Detachment coin, a few gift cards and wished them well. I told them I was a retired Sergeant Major and then I told his sister that my favorite rank was L/Cpl. I said, "I liked being a L/Cpl so much, that I was a L/Cpl twice". Without missing a beat, she said, "SO AM I".....

We all laughed and I said "See, you have potential".....It was a good visit and we all shook hands and wished them well as we left the room.

On the other side of the floor, Father Mike, Steve and Art visited a Marine from San Francisco who had a leg injury from an IED explosion. He told Art, Steve and Father Mike the explosion hit him just right, meaning. It almost killed him and the rest of his unit. Thank God it did not. The next Marine that they visited was from Kentucky who had a leg wound and was stitched up from his foot to his waist. His wife told them he should get almost 98% of use of his leg back when he recovers. He told them that the quick medical attention he received in the field saved his leg. A loud OOH RAH needs to go to the Corpsman in the field and the Nurses and Doctors at the field BAS's (Battalion Aid Stations) who treat and take care of them after they have been wounded.

All of the wounded we saw at both hospitals were given blankets, Detachment coins, Detachment brochure, gifts cards along with an application from the Family & Friends for Freedom Fund. It was a great visit, as usual, and I look forward to the next one.

Linda and I attended a Beef Steak Dinner put on by the Harrington Park Knights of Columbus on Saturday night. One of my friends, Dennis Jones, who is a member of this Council made a visit with us two months ago and at his next meeting told them what we do at the Slattery Detachment. I spoke at the dinner about who we are and what we do and why we do this. They enjoyed my talk and I passed out my card and the Detachment brochure. Hopefully some will make a trip or want to donate to the "Marines Helping Marines" program. There was a very large 50/50 raffle that cost \$25 a ticket. A lady came over to me before the drawing and gave me her ticket, she told me if this ticket hits, use it for what you do. I thanked her a few times, but unfortunately it did not win. But as they say, it's the thought that counts. It was a good night and I was glad I attended.

So if you are reading this report for the first time and want to know what we do with the money we collect and where it goes, well now you know. If you want to make a donation, please do so. It will be greatly appreciated by the men and women we get to visit. All it takes for us to make these visits is the time of day. We don't have to drive; we enjoy good company on the ride to and from and meet a lot of GREAT people.....

It's a great way to spend a day with the men and women who serve in our Armed Forces who have given so much of themselves to protect our freedom and to ensure the freedom of others. OOH RAH...

**"The spirit of a man is more important than mere physical strength, and the spiritual fiber of a nation than its wealth".**

General Dwight D Eisenhower

*Semper Fidelis,*

**Eddie Neas  
SgtMaj/ USMCR/RET  
Alpha 1/1, Viet Nam**