



Bethesda Medical Center Trip Report

Our trip this month to visit the wounded was Wednesday, 14 October. Four of us from the Slattery Detachment made the trip. A friend of mine Dennis Jones, a former Marine and Viet Nam Vet, made his first visit. We all met at Newark Penn Station and left for Washington at 0730. Here are the names from the Slattery Detachment who made this month's trip. Marc Purcelli, Eddie Neas, Chris Holleran and Steve Bliss. We arrived at Bethesda Naval Hospital around 1130 and met with Don Patterson and headed down to get some good old military chow, Tasted Ok and yes it was Cheap.....

After chow we headed up to the fifth floor to start our visit. We met up with Mike and Tony from the Maryland Marine Corps League, so the Marine Corps League was well represented. Approximately 5-7 wounded Marines were recently admitted to the hospital from Afghanistan, so we had plenty to see this visit.

We visited nine Marines, all who had been wounded in Afghanistan. There was also a young SSgt who was on the other side of the floor who is being treated for cancer. More on him later. The Marines we saw were from the following units. A few were from the following Infantry Battalions, 2/8 and 2/3. There were two Marines from the newly formed Special Operations Command. One was from Camp Lejeune and the other from Camp Pendleton. There were also Marines from 8th Engineers and 2ND LAR at Camp Lejeune. So, as you can see various units have been involved in the fight in Afghanistan. Most had been wounded by IED blasts and one or two have gunshot wounds. The stories they told us about how they were wounded and how a buddy or two or three were killed in the same blast made you cringe a little inside. Same story, just a different month. A few of them tell you, "I am alive and in the hospital because of the Marine two doors down". You go two doors down to see that Marine and he said the same thing about the Marine we just left. Very humbling to hear these Marines talk about each other. Like it's no big deal what they did or what they have been through.

The first Marine we stopped by to visit had just gotten to the hospital in the last few days. He was wounded in an IED blast while on a foot patrol. He was in good spirits and his family really appreciated that we took the time to stop by and say hello. We gave him the Marine Corps blanket, detachment coin, \$25 gift card and all of the other stuff we bring down with us. He thanked us we said "Semper Fi" and shook hands and headed to the next room. We met the next Marine who was in the room with his mother and girlfriend. They were from Wisconsin. The Marine's girlfriend was in the Air Force and from Boston. I told her I was from Brooklyn and a Yankee fan. She looked at me and snarled at me in a funny way. LOL Maybe it had something to do with the

Yankees in and the Red Sox out of the playoffs. We all laughed about that. After we passed out the blanket and gift card, coin we all smiled. We even gave the mother and girlfriend a Dress Blue teddy bear and before we left I went and gave her one of the Air Force Blankets we had. She really appreciated it and I guess now she likes the Marines more than ever, LOL.

We were then asked to go and talk to the father of a Marine who was in surgery. We met him in the TV room and told him who we are and what we do. He was a very thankful and as we gave him all the items we give to everyone else. During the conversation Steve Bliss told him he went to school in Wisconsin and the father said his daughter went to the same school. It's a small world and now it was like we were all old friends. He greatly appreciated the fact that we take the time to do what we do. We told him it's the least that we can do and I wish we could do more.

We moved to another room and met the mother of a Marine who has a TBI (traumatic brain injury). Her son was injured in a helicopter crash and will have a long road ahead of him as he heals and rehabs over the next few months. This family will need all the help and support they can get during the next few months. Put this family in your prayers and ask whoever you look to or pray to for guidance to help this young L/Cpl out as he recovers from his injuries..

The last Marine we saw was the young SSgt who has some form of cancer. He just recently had his first treatment of chemo. This Marine was in Afghanistan got sick, and now has to fight off the cancer. Sometimes life throws you more in a month than you should get in a lifetime. We met his wife and mother and his two kids who were in the room. His mother wanted to take a picture of us and her son. After the picture, we all hugged and she thanked us big time. We found out that the mother is retired Air Force and yes, I went all the way back to where our stuff was and got her the last Air Force blanket we had. Tears welled up in her eyes and she said "I don't know what it is about the Marines, but you guys always look out for each other. I said, yes we do, and everyone else also. OOH RAH....."

It was a great visit as usual and I look forward to the next one. With the Holidays coming up in the next few months and things heating up in Afghanistan it could be a tough holiday season for some. Let's all look to do all we can to make things a little easier for the men and women and their families during the upcoming holiday season, both at home in New Jersey and at the hospitals we visit. Say a prayer or two in the coming months for all the men and women who are over in Iraq and Afghanistan serving our country and away from their families and loved ones.

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 past year or so as we return to Union Station to get the AMTRAC train back to New Jersey. We all put in \$5 each and get Powerball Lottery tickets. I just could not imagine what we could do for the Marines Helping Marines program if we hit....Yes, there have been a few small nibbles, but the big one has eluded us so far. I will keep you posted.

“It is no use saying “We are doing our best.” You have got to exceed in doing what is necessary.

Sir Winston Churchill

That's it for this months visit. The next visit is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, 18 November 2009. Enjoy the day and hope all is well on your side of the FEBA...

Semper Fidelis,

**Eddie Neas
SgtMaj/ USMCR/RET
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