



## Bethesda Hospital Trip Report

Our last trip to visit the wounded was Wednesday, 27 October 2010. Six members of the Slattery Detachment made this month's trip. Detachment members were Marc Purcelli, Eddie Neas, Bob Stalzer, Steve Bliss, Chris Holleran and Father Mike Hanly.

We left from Newark Penn Station as usual at 0730. The train ride was longer than usual as we had a delay of almost an hour with other train problems and our train picking up their passengers. It was raining as we left the train station and walked across the street to Bethesda, so we got a little wet. First time that has ever happened. This trip would present a number of first time situations and memories. The Military Order of Devil Dogs, Maryland Pack would be holding a Barbecue for the wounded at Mercy Hall and we were invited also. Thanks to the Department of Maryland Marine Corps League for the hospitality and good food. The cooking went on in the rain and the tables of food were moved closer to the building under a section of over hangs so we all could at last eat in a dry environment. Many of us had our days eating chow in the rain when we served in the Corps. But not today, Ooh Rah...

We were told that the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Joseph F. Dunford Jr., would be visiting and awarding Purple Heart medals to the wounded on the floor. The hospital was packed with wounded and as you can see from reading the newspaper and watching TV, things have picked up in Afghanistan. There were over 40 patients from all of the military services in the hospital. Some were in the ICU. We did not get to visit them. We saw at least one member from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines on this visit. That was the first time that has happened in some time. We also talked with a Major General from the US Air Force who was making a visit. We coined him with a Slattery Detachment coin. We shook hands and thanked each other for what we are both doing. We also met and talked with LtGen John F Kelly who is the Commander of Marine Forces Reserve. He was there on a visit also. We talked and introduced ourselves and yes, we coined him also. There was also a congressional delegate from the island of Guam making a visit. We did not get to talk to her as she was in a room visiting one of the Navy personnel on the floor. The floor was crowded with all of the visitors, families and hospital staff, so we made sure that we did not get in the way.

We split into two groups; Marc, Chris and myself on one side and Father Mike, Steve and Bob on the other. We usually have our visiting system down pat; where we start and each taking a side, but we were bouncing from room to room and side to side. At times, some of us each did a single visit to make sure we could visit everyone. We ran out of everything we took to the hospital; blankets coins, bears, quilts and gift cards.

For the first time since I have been doing these visits in four and a half years, we came back empty handed. We gave out every gift card we had, 25, \$50 gift cards and one \$300 gift card for a total of \$1,550. Wow. Thanks to all of our contributors, Detachment members, family, friends and all organizations who have made donations to our Marines Care program at the Slattery Detachment. It is greatly appreciated by all who we get to visit.

The Marines and Corpsman we saw were from the following units, Combat Logistics Battalion 2 and Headquarters Battalion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marines from Camp Lejeune, NC, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines and 1<sup>st</sup> Combat Engineer Battalion from Camp Pendleton. We also visited an Air Force EOD Tech who was back in the hospital after being wounded two years ago by an IED. More on him later.

Most of the Marines we saw had been wounded by IED explosions and some had gunshot wounds. 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines has taken heavy casualties since they arrived in Afghanistan. Please keep these Marines and Corpsman in your prayers. Some of the Marines we saw on this visit had been in country for less than two months. One Marine had only been there for a week and half. A lot of young Marines, all on their first tour and were now back in the states recovering from their wounds. They all appeared to be in good spirits and were glad to see us. One Marine that Bob, Steve and Father Mike visited told him the following after they asked how he was doing. He said "I was fine until the pulled out they damn chest tube". Here he is lying in bed recovering from his wounds in combat and he makes a joke about them removing his chest tube. A loud Ooh Rah to these young warriors.

We visited the Air Force EOD technician who was sharing a room with a Marine. We visited the Marine first and I told the EOD tech we would see him after he finished eating chow. We walked over to his bed and I looked down and saw he was a double amputee. The end of his right leg was all healed, but his left leg had recently been stitched. I asked him what had happened and he told me he was wounded two years ago and he had lost his right leg and they tried to save the left leg, but it gave him too much trouble. So he told the doctors to take it off. He said it without batting an eye like they were changing a band aid on a skinned knee. Tough Cookie here, no doubt. He told us the Air Force had given him a ton of money to re-enlist with one leg and he couldn't wait to see what they were going to give him with both legs gone. Yes, he had the Shxx eating grin on his face. You have to love the attitude on the men.

The last Marine we saw was a young L/Cpl who had been severely wounded. He was a double leg amputee, both hands were heavily bandaged and he had stitches running down the entire length of his nose. There were seven family members in his room and most of them have been there since he arrived. As I always do, I reached to shake his hand but with both hands being bandaged, I started to do a small, light fist tap. A few of his family member said, go ahead, shake his hand, he will grip it. So I put my hand in his hand and he squeezed mine, like there was nothing wrong with his. I can't tell you how I felt when he did that. Here was this severely wounded Marine and he is shaking my hand like I just ran into him on the street.

I felt like I needed to go put on my uniform, walk to Afghanistan and start kicking some Arse, all by myself. You can't make up the stories about what these young men and women do and say while in the hospital. You should come and see for yourself. Join me on a future visit. As I said before, this was the last Marine we visited, I was out of \$50 gift cards and felt bad that I had none to give him, but then I remembered that I still had a \$300 gift card that I was holding for a special time. Well this was that time. So I said please hold on for a minute and I will be right back. I walked back in to the room and said to all seven of his family in the room, "Please accept this gift card on behalf of the Slattery Detachment, our family and friends and the other organizations we work with, and go out and have dinner on us tonight". They could not believe what I was giving them along with all of the other items we give out. We all shook hands hugged and said thank you. Of course I told them not to try and purchase warm beer with the card as it will void out. After a second or two we all laughed on that one. His father was an Army Viet Nam Vet. We talked a little about where we were and when we were there and found out we were both there around the same time. We both shook hands and I said Semper Fi.

We gave out 25 \$50 gift cards, one \$300 gift card to the one family and a \$300 gift card to the Marine Liaison section. We also gave out seven Marine Corps, two Navy, one Army and one Air Force blanket.

So to all of you who have donated money and/or purchased items from our Detachment, we thank you for what you do. We also gave out the Detachment coin and Dress Blue Teddy Bears. We also gave out the applications from the Family & Friends for Freedom Fund. To say some are amazed that people they don't even know are trying to help them, would be putting it mildly. Hopefully, some of them will send them in so Bob and Kathy's organization can help them out. A big OOH RAH to the both of them.

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...

**"If we ignore the historical importance of our profession, the society from which it comes, and why it is worth preserving, we run the risk of the guardians not valuing what they guard."**

General John A Wickham

*Semper Fidelis,*

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