



Walter Reed & Bethesda Medical Center Trip Report

Well it's been two months since we made our last visit. In December there was no trip as most of the wounded were sent home to spend the holidays with their families. This is a good thing. It helps everyone heal as a family during the holiday season. In January there were only one or two patients, both on the 5th floor at Bethesda, and one was going home the day before our schedule trip. The other Marine was able to get out of his bed and was doing well from what we were told. So a slow month at the hospitals and to me and everyone else, I know that is great news.

It's good to see that our military services have a good handle on things in Iraq and Afghanistan. Lets hope and pray that it will keep up in the coming months. That's a good reason not to make a visit, no wounded at the hospitals.

Listed below are the names of the Marines from the Slattery Detachment who made this month's trip.

Father Mike Hanly
Bob Stalzer
Eddie Neas
Marc Purcelli
Steve Bliss
Jim Heien

We decided to make a visit to both hospitals this month and we split into two groups. Marc and I left from Newark Penn Station at 0545 so we could make a visit to Walter Reed. Father Mike, Bob, Steve and Jim left about 0730 and we met them at Bethesda around 12 noon.

Marc and I arrived at Walter Reed around 0915 and met Don Patterson in the lobby. We were able to visit three wounded Soldiers. The first Soldier we met had lost his leg below the knee in a Motorcycle accident after returning from Iraq. Spends all that time in Iraq comes home and gets cut off on the highway flips on the motorcycle and loses his leg, Unbelievable. He in good spirits and was getting to leave and go back home. And yes he is looking to stay in the Army....OOH RAH.

For almost every trip I have made during the past three years, there is always one story or person we meet that lets me know we are doing GREAT things during our visits. Well here is the one for February.

Marc, Don and I walked into a room with an Army Soldier sitting up in bed. He was missing his right leg below the knee, and had a broken left arm with stitches all the way up from his hand to his armpit. He was eating breakfast; more on this later. His wife was in the room along with an Army SSgt who worked at the liaison section in the hospital. As always, I gave him the speech on who, what, and where we were from and why we make these visits. I gave him all the stuff that we always bring down and give out such as gift cards, Detachment coins, calling cards, get well cards from a few local schools in New Jersey, and of course a Marine Corps Blanket. I would have given him an Army blanket, but I had already given it out. I say, "I know you don't have one of these and I am out of Army blankets". He said, "That is Ok, I'll take it as my brother is a Marine". OOH RAH!!!!

I finished what I had to say and then asked him to tell me about himself. This young looking, (OK all are young looking compared to me, LOL) Soldier was an Army Medic with an artillery unit from Alaska. I asked him when he was wounded. He then told me the date and the exact time, 1247. I told him that I knew the date and time I was wounded in Hue City on 28 February 1968 at 0917. I knew that because I saw the time on my WIA tag.

As I started to ask him how come he knew the time, a doctor and his assistant walked into the room and were listening to all of us talk. He remembered the time because he and two other soldiers walked into a room in an abandoned town outside his unit's perimeter. He looked up and saw the ceiling fan turning. He tells everyone that there is still power in the building and to be careful. It was around lunchtime and he looked at his watch, it was 1247. He said, "I am f---g hungry". The soldier in front of him looked at the refrigerator in the room and opened the door in a humorous gesture about getting him something to eat...THE ROOM EXPLODED.....

As he started to talk about what happened next, I turned to the Doctor who I later found out was a Psychiatrist. I asked him if we had to leave, he looked me in the eye and said, "NO, you all stay right there and continue. He has not talked this long and about what happened to him since he has been in the hospital!".....OOH RAH.

The Medic then told me what happened next. His Platoon Sergeant lost one leg and his arm at his shoulder. He crawled over to him and put on two tourniquets and gave him a shot of morphine. He put his GOOD hand on the wounded soldiers face (remember, his other arm was broken) and told him to keep repeating out loud "I WILL NOT DIE!" He did this so he could crawl over to his other buddy and start first aid on him. This way with his back to his Platoon Sergeant, he would know he was OK. He patched up the soldier and gave him a shot of morphine.

He then sat up as well as he could with his back against the wall in the middle of his two wounded friends so he could help them if needed. He then started to take care of his own wounds. Now remember, this Soldier lost part of his leg, his left arm was shattered and he finally applied a tourniquet to his leg and was going to give himself a shot of morphine, but he had none left. He had used up what he had on his buddies.

Yes he was in pain, but said to himself, "I need to SUCK IT UP AND DEAL WITH THE PAIN and wait for help to arrive".....**WHERE DO WE GET MEN LIKE THIS???**

On top of that two weeks ago he had to have emergency surgery on his small intestines and could have died. Unbelievable, but he is doing fine...

To finish the breakfast story when we walked into the room he was eating a bowl of, get this, "**LUCKY CHARMS**" I guess they do work...

This was an incredible visit and story and **WE** were in the room to hear it. As we all started to leave and say our good byes, the Doctor came over to me, shook our hands and thanked us for what we do.....Hey, all we did was take the time to make a visit. The people who need to be thanked are the ones we are visiting and serving our country...

We also visited a soldier who will be living in Keyport, NJ and is having a home built or remodeled for him. He lost both legs below the knees and has two young children under the age of six. He got everything from us and we also gave him two of the Dress Blue Teddy Bears that we give out to the kids we meet at the hospitals. I have also invited him to the L/Cpl Chris Cosgrove III Golf outing in July and hopefully he will be able to make it. I know the Detachment is planning on helping out in some way with the building of his home. So, more to follow on this.

We then packed up to head over to Bethesda to meet with the rest of the Members from the Slattery Detachment. We met them and headed down to the chow hall to grab some good ole military food. Ok, It's not like it used to be, but it's still cheap.

We then headed up to the fifth floor and split into two groups so we could cover everyone on the floor and spend some quality time with them. We were joined by two members from the Maryland Marine Corps League, Bob and Greg.

We were able to visit six Marines and two Soldiers. Three of the Marines were a LtCol and two Colonels, so there was a lot of Yes Sir and No Sir's going around,,,,LOL. They were from the following units, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines who were wounded in Afghanistan and from Camp Lejeune, NC. One Soldier was from the Kentucky National Guard with the 2nd Special Operations Unit. Another Soldier was injured in a car accident in South Carolina. Everyone got the same treatment from us.

The LtCol and his wife had to leave for Rehab so all we were able to do was say hello. We met him for the first time in November. He is getting better, but has a long road ahead of him. Keep this Marine in your prayers. I dropped off one of the quilts we had and put it on his bed.

One of the Colonels was from the Pentagon area and had surgery for a hip replacement. He is a Ch-53 pilot and he and Greg, a former crew chief with HMX-1, both had a good conversation on Helo's as we all listened.

Now get this, he is amazed at what we are doing and wants to get his checkbook and give us a check! Of course I refused, he is a patient lying in bed. (Not to many times you can tell a Colonel NO, OOH RAH) I gave him the MHM brochure and my card and told him he could send a check to the Detachment. He may even make a visit or two with us in the future after he recovers.

We told him about a retired Colonel on the other side of the ward who had the same type of Surgery, so he said he would work his way over there to say hello.

Gotta Love the Marines...

The Retired Colonel was a former member of 1st Tank Battalion and he and his wife appreciated that we stopped by to say hello and drop off all of the items that we give out.

So in a nutshell, this was a great visit, and meeting the Army Medic and hearing his story was the highlight of the trip for us.

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.

Again, the next time you are in church or your place of worship, say a BIG prayer for these men and women who serve in our Armed Forces. Or do like I do once in a while. When you pass the place you go, DON'T PASS IT. Drop in and say a prayer and then continue on to where you are going. It will make you feel better.

“ The very efficiency of the army depends upon fortitude, integrity, self-restraint, personal loyalty to other persons and to surrender of the individual to the common good”

General Sir John Hackett

That's it for this months visit. Next visit is scheduled Wednesday, 25 March 2009. Enjoy the day and hope all is well on your side of the FEBA...

Semper Fidelis,

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