



Bethesda Hospital Trip Report

Our trip this month to visit the wounded was Wednesday, 24 February 2010. Four members from the Slattery Detachment made this month's trip. They were Marc Purcelli, Eddie Neas, Chris Holleran and Jerry Gallicchio. We also had a special friend along on this trip for her second visit with us. Her name is Shirley Parrello. She is a gold star mother who lost her son Brian, a Marine, in January of 2005 in Iraq.

We left from Newark Penn Station at 0730 and arrived in Washington DC and then took the Red Line train to Bethesda. We have met many people along the way over the past few years and have become very friendly with all of them. One lady, Micki, who works for the DC Metro railroad has helped us many times with tickets over the years. It has become a ritual that before we take a ride on the Red Line, we stop and pick up a few cookies to show our appreciation for the help she has given us over the years. It quite a scene as all of the passengers going in and out of the station watch as we all hug and say hello to each other. We are not hard to spot as we all have some sort of Marine red clothing or hat, I mean, Cover on. It could be said that we take over the train station for a few minutes, Ooh Rah.

We all arrived at Bethesda Naval Hospital around 1200 and then had lunch with a few of the Occupational & Physical Therapists who take care of the wounded men and women we visit. This is another SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) that we have on our monthly trips. A fun time is had by all.

With the recent events taking place in Afghanistan, Bethesda is starting to get busy. There were a total of about 18 or so wounded or injured Marines on the floor for this month's visit. We were able to visit nine of the Marines. Some of the ones we did not see were either in surgery or doing Rehab in another part of the hospital or were able to get up and walk around the hospital.

We met Don Patterson, Tony and Bob from the Maryland Department of the Marine Corps League and started our visit. We split into two groups. I, Shirley and Bob took one side and Marc, Jerry and Chris took the other side of the floor.

The Marines we saw on this visit were from the following units, 1st and 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marines, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, 2nd Combat Engineers and one Marine who was with an Embedded Training Team working with the Afghan Army. We were told that General Conway, the Commandant of the Marine Corps would be on Friday to award these Marines their Purple Hearts, OOH RAH.

Most of the Marines we saw had been wounded by IED explosions and a few had received wounds by rifle or machine gun fire. One of the first Marines we saw had been injured falling out of a helicopter. He had a serious back injury but with some Rehab in the coming months he should return to full duty. A Marine in the same room with him had numerous shrapnel wounds had a few more operations needed on his right foot and he should be OK also. We wished them both well, said Ooh Rah and Semper Fi and shook hands and said good bye.

The next Marine we saw was getting ready to leave and head back home. His mother and fiancé were with him. They seemed quite surprised that we came by and after I told them who we were and why we do this. His mother wanted to give all of us a hug. They were from Georgia and heard some horror stories about being up North, LOL. We all laughed. She appreciated all that we do and thanked and hugged us one more time after we gave out the usual items.

We saw the family of a Marine in the family room who just returned from surgery. We told them why we were here and gave them all of the items and they thanked us for doing what we do.

The last Marine we saw was just returning from walking around with his family. He was on crutches and we asked him if he had a few minutes for us to say hello. Well that few minutes turned into about 20 and we listened to him as he told us how he had been wounded. He also had a few tattoos on his body. Someone asked him what hurt more, being wounded by shrapnel or getting a tattoo? He said, "What hurt the most was getting his name tattooed on his arm pit". Yes I said ARM PIT. He then leaned his crutches on the wall, lifted up his shirt and showed us the tattoo on his arm pit. Gotta Love the Marines.....OOH Rah. He thanked us for stopping by and we all said good bye and we wished him well.

All of the wounded we saw at both hospitals were given their Service blanket, Detachment coins, Detachment brochure, Watch, gift cards along with an application from the Family & Friends for Freedom Fund. We started giving out watches two visits ago because a few of them told us they don't have any of their personal stuff and are always looking for the time on their wrist, but no watch. So Tom Miller from our Detachment contacted a company called "Sgt Grit", worked out a deal and we now pass out watches on our visit. Good job, Tom.....It was a great visit, as usual, and I look forward to the next one.

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...

“No matter how fine its weapons, no matter how accurate its intelligence, in the final analysis, the Army is dependent on the quality of its men”.

General Matthew B. Ridgway

Semper Fidelis,

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