



Bethesda Medical Center and Walter Reed Army Hospital Trip Report

The following Marines from the L/Cpl Robert J Slattery Detachment Marine Corps League made this trip. We visited the men and women at Walter Reed Army and Bethesda Naval Hospitals on Wednesday 30 April 2008.

Marc Purcelli
Eddie Neas
Pete Gallo
Father Mike Hanly
Steve Bliss

As usual, we left Newark, NJ Penn Station at 0546 and arrived in Washington DC around 0850. We split into two groups this month, Father Hanly and I took off for Walter Reed, and Pete, Marc and Steve headed to Bethesda. A few comments from the hospital administration have been made over the past few months. They say that when we all arrive together, it's like having a platoon on the scene. Hey, I wish I could bring a platoon and occupy the area for a few days,,OOH RAH..... So this month we decided to split into two groups and it worked very well.

Father Hanly and I met Don Patterson in the lobby. The first stop we had to make was to visit a group of four Soldiers from the same SOPS (Special Operations) team (75th Ranger Battalion) who were all severely wounded on the same operation in Afghanistan. The team leader, a Master Sgt and three SSgt's were all on the same floor. I guess they don't like being too far from each other....Semper Fi.

We introduced ourselves and told them who we are and what we do. I always tell the men and women that we visit that we are a part of the "Marines Helping Marines" program from the Marine Corps League and that we just don't visit Marines. I tell them that we are honored and very proud of what all members of the military services do for this country. We found out that the MSgt and SSgt who were in the same room both had to apply tourniquets to themselves to a limb on their own body so they did not bleed to death. Then they had to crawl down the mountain so they could get to a secure place to be Med Evac-ed! Talk about spending some time in Hell! I am not going to go in detail, but they were all very badly wounded and somehow with their SOPS training and focus, survived and were now back in the hospital recovering from their wounds.

I told them that I had a big place in my Heart and Brain Housing Group for SOPS Soldiers, as my Uncle, a former Green Beret, Ranger and Helicopter Pilot, and nephew both served with SOPS units.

My hat, or shall I say, My Cover is off to all of you who serve this great country. We also talked to the family members who were in the room and one wife just loved my Accent (I used to live in Brooklyn) and they were from Texas. I told her I don't have an accent, she just hears funny. They would love to visit New York and I told them if they get the time and really want to, I would be honored to take them around and show them a good time in the City, and of course Brooklyn.

We also had the pleasure to visit 1st Lt Borden. We were asked to visit with him last month, but he was in the OR when we stopped by. We met his father and a friend of the family who is a former Marine and is a member of the MCL in Pennsylvania. They were glad to see us, but they had to leave the room and go meet the NY Giants who were in the hospital to visit the men and women. We were supposed to be out of the hospital by 1100 because the Giants were going to be making their rounds. Sorry, but we didn't make it. It was the first time I have ever missed a deadline,,,,,,,,,,,,, THAT DAY. OOH RAH.

Father Hanly has been in touch with one of the wounded Marines he met a few visits ago and had his cell number. He called him up and then went up to the rehab floor and said hello. Father Hanly told me a story that he had one of the classes at his Parish call him on a speakerphone to say hello a while back. The kids ended the conversation with a thank you, and then a loud "SEMPER FI AND OOH RAH FOLLOWED." Gotta love that.....

While waiting for Father Hanly to come back down to the floor, Eli Manning, Brandon Jacobs and about six other NY Giants exited the elevator and walked to the ward. As they walked by, I reached out to shake Eli's hand and said, I am down from New Jersey, I am a NY Jets fan, and then told him he played a great game. He shook my hand back and said thank you. YES, I AM JET FAN.....

We gave out four Army blankets to the Special OPS Soldiers and a Marine Corps blanket to 1stLt Borden along with gift cards, calling cards, detachment coins, Get Well cards from local schools and applications for the Family and Friends for Freedom Fund and of course the Marine teddy bears in dress blues which is always a hit.

We then headed over to meet up with Pete, Marc and Steve at Bethesda. Not sure of what they had been doing in the morning, but we were about to find out. Pete had called Congressman Frelinghuysen's office to see if he was in town. The visit at Bethesda could not start until 1300, so they had some time to kill. The Congressman was in town so they took a walk over to his place and said hello. In case some of you don't know, the Congressman has been a big time supporter of the Marines Helping Marines Program and was instrumental in getting AMTRAC to assist us with our monthly visits by train at no cost to the Slattery Detachment. He's got my vote when he runs for re-election. There are so many people, organizations and companies that help make our monthly visits to the hospitals a pleasure and most rewarding. Thank You.....

We met Pete, Marc and Steve in the cafeteria to break for chow. Yea, it's lunch to most people, but to us Marines, It's CHOW...

There were three Marines and one Army National Guard, a former Marine, on the floor at Bethesda. The Marines were members of the following units, 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, 2nd Supply Battalion and 2nd MLG, Combat Logistics Regiment.

The first Marine we met was pretty badly wounded by an IED and his Mother sat by his bedside in a wheel chair.....And to think sometimes I, or shall I say, we are having a Bad Day. I DON'T THINK SO.

When some of you go to sleep at night or when in Church on a Sunday, please ask God to help out in anyway that he can for the men and women and their families as they try and get through the rehab and future that lies ahead. And to think that I get mad when I miss a putt, playing golf.....

We then made a visit to the room where the Army National Guard Soldier a former Marine was. He had a sever TBI (traumatic Brain Injury) and this was a tough visit for me and I am to assume everyone else. We dropped off the blanket and all of the other stuff we had. His mother was not in the room and had left to get something to eat. I was hoping she would be back by the time we left, but she was not. Father Hanly bent down, anointed him, and said a prayer.

The Marine we visited next was walking around on crutches and some of us were trying to get him to sit down and relax. He would have none of it. We ran into him again at the PX, when we were on our way out. He was finally in a wheel chair being pushed by his mother and sister. We gave all of them a Teddy Bear along with the blanket and other stuff.

The last young Marine we saw was in the hospital undergoing treatment with some type of cancer. He was in Iraq and was having headaches and had to return to the USA. We gave him and his mother all of the stuff we had and the thing that brought a tear to her eye was one of the get well cards from one of the local schools in New Jersey. She apologized to us for crying and I told her, no need to apologize, we do it too.

Needless to say, A GREAT VIST.....It is a great way to spend a day with the men and women and their families who are protecting our Freedom and Way of Life. I just hope and pray that what we do brings a little joy and few minutes of relief from pain as they head into the future. There is never enough being done nor should anyone think we have done enough for these great men and women and their families.

That's it for this months visit. Next visit is scheduled Wednesday, 28 May 2008.

“You have not done enough, you have never done enough, so long as it is possible that you have something to contribute.”

Dag Hammarskjold

Semper Fidelis,

**Eddie Neas
SgtMaj/ USMCR/RET**