



## Walter Reed & Bethesda Medical Center Trip Report

Well it's been a month or so since our last visit. The past few months have been kind of quiet in both Iraq and Afghanistan. So that is good news as there have only been a few or no wounded at the hospitals. There are patients who come in for therapy or are on an out patients basis. This is good news, but as we all know, this could change in a heartbeat.

It's good to see that our military services have a good handle on things in Iraq and Afghanistan. Let's 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. Keep those prayers coming?

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

Bob Stalzer, Marc Purcelli, Steve Bliss, Eddie Neas and Shirley Parrello.

We had a very special visitor with us this month; Shirley Parrello is a Gold Star Mother who lost her 19 year old son, Brian on 1 January 2005 in Iraq. He was a US Marine. She met Art Bowie at Picatinny Arsenal and he told her about our monthly visits. She said she was interested and would like to make a visit with us. I contacted her and told her the who, what, where and why we do this and she told me she would love to make a visit. She met me at Newark Penn Station at 0515 and we took the train down to Walter Reed to meet up with Don Patterson. The rest of the guys, Marc, Bob and Steve left about 0730. We met them at Bethesda around 1230 and had chow in the cafeteria prior to making our visit on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor.

We met Don at Walter Reed and proceeded to the MATC (Military Advanced Training Center) location where we met with one Marine, a few Soldiers and one Air Force Special OPS guy who was working out with a vengeance. He was a double leg amputee and was not missing a beat. More on him in a minute. We also got to talk to a brother of a Soldier from Staten Island, NY who had lost all or some parts of both his legs and arms. He was heading to another part of the hospital and we did not get a chance to talk to him. But his brother stopped and talked to us as he left. I gave him an Army blanket, gift card, Detachment coin and all of the other stuff that we give out. I told him about who were and why we do this. He appreciated the fact that we take the time to do this.

We headed up to make a visit to another Air Force Special Ops guy named Marc. He had two badly damaged legs. We talked to him for almost 15 minutes.

He described in detail how he was wounded and also identified all of the vehicles in the convoy and what type of weapons they had on each one. It is amazing the focus that these young men and women have after being badly wounded. Don had already given him an Air Force blanket and one of his canes. We gave him all the other stuff we had with us and it was appreciated. While we were there, a few more Air Force personnel from the Liaison section and other units showed up. We met with some of his family and they all appreciated the fact that we stopped by. Shirley and his mother talked outside and I know each other try to do what Mothers do to try and make things better and to comfort each other. You could see the look on everyone's face when we left; it was a look of thank you and gratitude. The grandfather was there and his grandson is a Marine and getting married on Saturday. So I broke out a Detachment coin and MC Blanket....You know, to keep them warm on the wedding night.....OOH RAH

One of the Airmen told us about the Special Ops guy we met earlier on the Rehab Floor. This guy is unique to say the least. He does not want to use a wheelchair or a cane. He is pushing himself beyond what is expected of him as he rehabs. He attended a ceremony a few weeks back and they were going to provide him with a wheelchair, he would not have any of that. He told them, "If I go, I WALK IN". He walked in and when he finally sat down, he turned to a buddy and said, that was ugly. His buddy said, you have always been ugly,,, LOL. Another story they told us he was on a fishing trip and one of his prosthetic legs broke. He repaired it as best he could. It broke again, so he just took off both legs and walked around on the ends of both amputated stumps. Yes he added some more abrasions to his legs, but he was not about to lie around and wait for the trip to end. Do you know the old saying, "Pain is weakness leaving the Body"? I saw a new one a few weeks ago while at the new Marine Corps Museum in Quantico. It said, "**Pain is Good, Extreme Pain is Extremely Good**". And as they say, if the shoe fits wear it. Well he is wearing it well. And as I have said before, where do we get men and women like this?

Shirley, Don and I then packed up to head over to Bethesda to meet with the rest of the Members from the Slattery Detachment. 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, JR and Wayne.

We were able to visit five Marines and two Soldiers. One Soldier we wanted to visit was sleeping, so we talked to his wife. We gave her all of the stuff we normally give out and told her why we do this. Tears welled up in her eyes and she thanked us for taking the time to see her. Almost all of the Marines were from 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marines and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Marines who are stationed in Afghanistan.

We saw a young Marine from Buffalo, NY who lost both legs. His mother and father appreciated that we did stop by. The last Marine we saw was from California. We met his Mother and wife and spent a little bit more time with them. They appreciated all they we did and then his Mother and Shirley hugged. You could see and feel all of the eyes starting to get wet. Shirley asked her if she would take a walk outside and they went

down the hall. Not sure what was said, but I can tell you, it was two mothers helping each other out in a big way.

This is something us guys can't bring along, so having Shirley there helped in a big way this visit. We all received a big hug from the mother and to say it was a tight hug would be putting it mildly. Both of these Marines have a rough road ahead of them, but hopefully with what we do, it will be a little bit easier. I have said in the past, that when our group makes a visit and we have a mom, dad, sister brother along on the trip and we walk in a room each one of us in our own way can connect and relate to someone in the room. Everyone in the room is looking for some type of help or support not just the man or woman who is lying in the bed.

Almost all of who we saw have injuries from IED's or land mines. The one Airman we saw at Walter Reed told me, he stepped on an unmarked land mine left over from the Russian Afghanistan war. We saw a number of men who had amputations of their arm or legs. Hopefully with all of the support they get from the hospital staff, family and friends and groups like us, it will be a little easier. Just want to pass on a big thank you for all that everyone does in our Detachment to help make this possible.

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 morale of soldiers comes from three things; a feeling that they have an important job to do, a feeling that they are trained to do it well, and a feeling that their good work is appreciated and recognized”**

General Bruce C. Clarke

That's it for this months visit. Next visit is scheduled Wednesday, 15 July 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**