



## Bethesda Medical Center 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 the Bethesda Naval Hospital on Wednesday 09 July 2008.

Marc Purcelli  
Eddie Neas  
Elisa Neas  
Tony Oszmianski  
Jim Heien

We left Newark, NJ Penn Station a little later in the day as we were only going to visit the Naval Hospital in Bethesda. We had not made a visit during May and June for a few reasons. The trip scheduled in May was right around Memorial Day weekend and most of the wounded and hospital staff were allowed to go home or be off site for a 96-hour liberty weekend. It was a much needed rest and long weekend for all. The other reason is that during the month of June there were few casualties and with only one or two being in the hospital, we decided to make the next trip in July. This is a good reason not to go; only a few wounded, but lo and behold, two weeks ago 17 wounded Marines and Soldiers arrived at Bethesda. So we decided to make a last minute trip instead of waiting till the end of the month. Doesn't it always happen this way? Here I am typing this report on Sunday afternoon and I just heard on the TV that nine soldiers have been killed and a bunch more have been wounded.

We arrived at Bethesda around 1215 and proceeded to drop off our gear and head down to the Cafeteria and chow down. In the good old days, there is nothing like good old Marine Corps chow, but this being a Naval facility, we had to settle for a choice of hot or cold entrée, salad bar or deli type sandwiches. Yea, like my Drill Instructor would let us do that...OOH RAH. Plus you could not beat the price. For \$5.00 you can feed two and have a few change left over.

We arrived on the fifth floor and broke down into two groups to ensure that we would be able to visit all on the floor. If they were in their room and would like visitors, we made our visit. The first two that Elisa and I visited were two female Marines who had recently had surgery. We talked to them and gave them the who, what and where we are from pitch.

Our group visited approximately 14 Marines and one Soldier. There was a Sergeant Major from 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marines in one of the rooms. He had lost his

Commanding Officer along with a few others in a suicide bomber attack and was not able to have any visitors. You all should have read about this attack in the newspapers two weeks ago.

We also saw a few Marines from Fox, 2/7 who had been wounded in Afghanistan. Of course I told them about the group from New Jersey who were activated during the Korean War and assigned to the same unit. I told one or two of them about Hector Cafferata, whom we all know was awarded the Medal of Honor during the battle in the Chosin Reservoir.

The Marines and the Soldier we all saw had various injuries from missing a limb or even two and shrapnel and gunshot wounds in various parts of their bodies. But all in all they were all in great spirits and morale. This can also be said for the family members we talked to. In a sense we try to help ease the pain and suffering that they must feel as they look at a loved one lying in the bed beside them. I feel blessed that we are in the room with them and words cannot describe what it feels like to be able to help. The families tell us over and over how they appreciate what we do for them. They always say Thank You, and I always say, don't thank us, just say, Hello. Semper Fi.

One of the comments that I always hear from some one who makes the trip for the first time is that they cannot understand how focused and motivated the wounded are. Some of them have missing limbs or are severely wounded with either gunshots or shrapnel, yet they appear to fine. Jim Heien was on his first visit and kept telling me a number of times that it was unbelievable to see this first hand. Yep, it is something else to see it in person.

As I always 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, 30 July 2008.

***“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. Wickman

***Semper Fidelis,***

**Eddie Neas  
SgtMaj/ USMCR/RET**