



## Bethesda Medical Center Trip Report

We had just over a Fire Team this month on our visit to Bethesda visit to the wounded men and women. Five of us met at Newark Penn Station and headed down to Washington, DC leaving at 0730.

Because Don Patterson our GO TO person at the hospital was at Quantico attending a reunion of the “Marines of Long Ago” from Wednesday thru Sunday, was not available. This was the real reason we did not visit Walter Reed.

Listed below are the names of the Men who made this trip.

Father Mike Hanly  
Eddie Neas  
Marc Purcelli  
Steve Bliss  
Jim Heien

This month was the third and final month that the Slattery Detachment donated funds for a Barbecue at Mercy Hall for the out patients at Bethesda and the Marines from the Liaison Section. Cold and inclement weather could possibly prevent us from continuing the barbecue in the coming months. So hopefully we could continue this next spring. Tony, J. R. and the rest of the Department of Maryland Marine Corps Leaguers do a fine job setting up and preparing the chow for all of us to enjoy. OOH RAH.....

We arrived at Union Station in Washington, DC around 1100 and then hopped on the Red Line train to the Naval Hospital. We were just in time as the barbecue had just started. There were 10-12 Marines at the barbecue and as we grabbed a bite to eat we sat down and talked to a few of them. Some have been there for a few months and were familiar to us.

We met a young L/Cpl who was in a wheel chair and sitting next to him was his father. A few of us went over and introduced ourselves and started a conversation. This young Marine was a 0341 mortar man with 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marines and had been wounded recently in Iraq. He said he had this and that (in other words was beating around the bush) His father had to step in and tell us exactly what had happened to his son. He had wounds from the top of his head (losing sight in his right eye) to his lower legs and numerous internal injuries. He was very upbeat and glad we stopped by to say hello. Needless to say, we gave him a Marine Corps blanket, gift card, detachment coin and all the other stuff we had brought down.

He is a wonderful young man and I wish all of you could have met him. Marines like that make this Viet Nam Veteran feel real proud of who is serving in our Corps today.

We then headed up to the fifth floor to start our visit. There were five Marines and one Navy Corpsman on the floor. We did not get to see one as he was down in the OR for surgery.

We walked into the room of a SSgt from MARSOC (Marine Special Operations). He had been wounded in Afghanistan and had suffered a gunshot wound in the ankle during hand-to-hand combat. To say this Marine was highly motivated would be putting it mildly. He proceeded to tell us what he was doing and what was not being done right by other units. He was very focused and we could have still been there listening to him. He was lying in his bed and was not happy not being with his unit.

The next Marine we saw was a Corporal from 3rd Combat Engineers. He was a double amputee. He lost both legs while on a road sweeping it for IED's and mines. His unit had cleared about 7 or 8 during the day when the next one was command detonated and he was severely wounded. What he remembered about the explosion was waking up on a stretcher holding **BOTH OF HIS LEGS** in his arms as he was being MEDEVACED to the hospital. It brought tears to his eyes and also to ours as we stood there and listened to him. I almost did not know what to say, but reached deep down and tried to tell him that in the two plus years that I have been on these monthly visits we had run into a number of men and women with the same type of wounds. I told them of how much all of them were now moving around on their own and in very good spirits. I told him how some of the wounded were now running, let alone walking. We kind of put a smile on his face and then started talking about the Marine Corps Ball and how he was looking forward to attending his Unit's when they returned from Iraq. This young Corporal is one of the Few and The Proud that we get to visit that make us feel great about our young men and women who serve our country today.

We visited 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Borden a Marine who we had visited a number of times before over the past year and a half. He had just returned from surgery for the umpteenth time.

Talking about surgery, the one Marine who was our escort was another young L/Cpl we got to visit months ago for the first time at Walter Reed. Both Father Mike and I remembered him and he recognized us also. He was sharp as a tack and was there to help motivate the wounded and get them moving in the right direction. He has had 129 surgeries since he had been in the hospital. Yes, 129 and this Marine is highly motivated.

The last person we got to see was a Corpsman with Bravo 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Marines. He was doing very well and appeared to be recovering well from a gun shot wound he received. He appreciated that we took the time to stop by and say hello and of course was very thankful that we gave him Navy blanket along with all the other stuff we had.

It was a very worthwhile trip to say the least. As we rode the train back to New Jersey all of us talked about how hard it must be to stay focused and motivated as they were after all they had been through and seen in combat. To say it is absolutely amazing would be putting it mildly.

Three of us who made the trip were Viet Nam Veterans, Marc, Steve and I and we all said the same thing. The wounds these men and women are surviving in Iraq and Afghanistan are beyond belief. A lot of them may not have made it back to the states alive, let alone to a field hospital were they wounded 40 years ago in Viet Nam.

A big time OOH RAH and SEMPER FI needs to go the Medics, Corpsman, Doctors and Nurses and the rest of the medical staff who do their part so these young men and women can survive these unbelievable wounds.

**“In the arena of human life the honours and rewards fall to those who show their good qualities in action”**

*Aristotle*  
*Nicomachean Ethics, circa 340 BC*

That's it for this months visit. Next visit is scheduled Wednesday, 29 October 2008.

*Semper Fidelis,*

**Eddie Neas**  
**SgtMaj/ USMCR/RET**