



Sergeant Edward J. Ryan, USMC Trip Report

We had a great trip last Tuesday to visit Sgt Eddie Ryan and his family. If you do not know the story of this fine young Marine, who was severely wounded in Iraq on 14 April 2005. I highly recommend that you take a look at his web site www.helpeddieryan.com. He was a Sniper with 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines. If you really want a first hand account of what happened to him and get to know him, take the time to visit this Marine. It will definitely make your day.

Eleven of us in three vehicles made the trip. Now you would think we would all ride together. NOPE! And/or at least follow in a convoy. NOPE! Or maybe arrive at the same place in Ellenville, NY. NOPE! Needless to say, some of the drivers' Map and Compass skills have passed them by even with GPS.....OOH RAH. But we all made it!

Listed below are the names of the Marines and friends of the Slattery Detachment who made this trip.

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| Father Mike Hanly | Tony Oszmianski | Pete Gallo |
| Jim Heien | Bob Stalzer | Dan Danzi |
| Eddie Neas | Mario Monaco | Domenick Monaco |
| Tom Cunningham | Operation Jersey Cares | |
| Bob Yuzuik | Operation Jersey Cares | |

The car I was riding in arrived in Ellenville somewhere around 1900 (7:00pm civilian time). As we drove up a winding road for about 1.5 miles to Eddie's house, I said to myself, "I wonder if Eddie ever ran up and down this hill for PT." When we arrived and met Sgt Ryan for the first time, I KNEW he had been up and down this hill a few times prior to be wounded. I had to ask him and he said, "Of course, and I had a pack on my back when I did." Marines come in all sizes, small, medium and large. Well Sgt Ryan is of the Large Studdly variety. We took the time to introduce ourselves to Eddie's mother, Angie and father, Chris. We met his sister later in the evening. We all spent the next hour and half talking with Eddie and his family about our war stories, and of course, listening to Eddie not just talk about himself, but of some of the Marines he served with and of course the few who saved his life that day when he was wounded.

I know most of us who have served in the Marines and other military services have our own "I LOVE ME WALL" in our homes. Well Sgt Ryan has an "I LOVE ME ROOM." His room is twice the size of mine. There are pictures and certificates from all kinds of organizations, both civilian and military.

There are a ton of autographed pictures from celebrities, actors and people who stopped by to wish him well while he recovered from his wounds.

There are also many from Marines Eddie served with or who had the opportunity to meet him after he was wounded, to include President Bush. They cover almost every foot of all four walls. I asked Eddie if some of us could walk around the room and look at everything. He did one better. He took us on a tour and described every photo and certificate in detail on every wall. This is a Marine who was severely wounded in the head and almost died a few times. Now almost four years later, he has a memory that goes beyond belief. He is a very special young man to say the least. He even showed us a picture of him catching a fish and I asked him if he ate it. He said loudly, "YES"..... Amazing!

The support and love he gets from his family goes beyond what most of us do in our daily lives as mothers and fathers dealing with normal day-to-day stuff. As I talked to his father and asked him how he was doing, he very honestly said, "I do the best I can and yes at times it is tough, but we are family and that's what we do here."

Operation Jersey Cares presented the Ryan family a sizable check, to help them out, as did Bob Stalzer who made out a personal check and gave it to the family. OOH RAH to both of them for their help. We also gave them a few other items such as the Slattery Detachment coin and three nice warm afghan blankets. One was from the Marine Assist program, and two from the Slattery Detachment. One had the Marine Corps emblem and one depicted the raising of the flag on Iwo Jima.

Lastly, Father Mike Hanly had a small Mass and we all prayed and received communion together. We may not all be catholic, but as Father Mike stated, we all have our own faith to believe and we all shared in a few minutes to pray and ask for help for the Ryan family. Man if only the people of other countries and religions could do things as easy as we did that night!

Towards the end of the visit, Eddie was put into a stand up type of harness to help strengthen his legs. He towered over all of us. All of a sudden he started singing The Marines' Hymn. We all snapped to attention and joined in. It was sight to behold.

As we all started to leave and hug and shake hands, Eddie said, "thank you" to each and every one of us by name. He remembered everyone's name. Unbelievable. It was a great visit and we are all looking forward to coming back to visit. If you are reading this letter, so should you!

"A man of character in peace is a man of courage in war. Character is a habit. The daily choice of right and wrong. It is a moral quality which grows to a maturity in peace and is not suddenly developed in war"

General Sir James Glover

"A Soldier and his Conscience," September 1973

Semper Fidelis,

Eddie Neas

SgtMaj/ USMCR/RET