



## **L/Cpl Robert J Slattery Detachment, Whippany, New Jersey**

Walter Reed National Military Medical Center Trip Report for 15 November 2012

Five members of the Slattery Detachment and one guest made this month's visit. Detachment members were Marc Purcelli, Eddie Neas, Father Mike Hanly, Steve Bliss & Bob Stalzer. Bob invited a friend named Bob Fochesto, a US Army Viet Nam Veteran who served with the 196<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Brigade. Welcome aboard Bob. We left as usual from Newark Penn Station on the 0620 train and we picked up Mark at the Trenton, NJ station and then we all headed down to Union Station in Washington, DC. We would meet up with Don Patterson at the Marine Liaison section in the main building. Don is a member of our Detachment who lives in southern Maryland. He visits the wounded at the hospital weekly and at times meets the wounded when they arrive at Andrews Air Force Base before they get to the hospital.

Before I get into the report on the visit I need to pass on some sad news for our Detachment. Mrs. Alice Slattery, the mother of L/Cpl Robert J Slattery whom our Detachment is named after passed away the night before Thanksgiving. I was in the same platoon in Boot Camp with Robert at Parris Island in 1966. We stood across from each other on the starboard side of the squad bay. We became good friends and he shipped off to Viet Nam after Camp Geiger and unfortunately he was KIA on 6 July 1967 while a member of H&S Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marines. I found out about 24 years ago that he was killed after I joined Delta Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 25<sup>th</sup> Marines the Marine Reserve unit at Picatinny Arsenal and seeing a plaque on the wall from our Detachment. A few phone calls later I would get all the details. I asked if his family still lived in the area and was told yes. After tossing and turning about going to see them, I decided to go. I met Mrs. Slattery and Robert's sister, Pat first and to say it was a little emotional, would be putting it mildly. Over the next few months I would meet the entire Slattery family. It was a friendship that will last a lifetime for me and my family. Please keep the Slattery Family in your prayers over the coming days.

During the past few months, we have made a few changes on how we do our visit. We now start off by visiting the wounded and their families in the hospital in the main building. We then walk over to the MATC clinic to visit the wounded and their families while they are doing their Rehab for their injuries. The MATC Clinic is a full service, state of the art, rehabilitation facility to care for the wounded. We all feel that we get to see more of the wounded and their families at both locations and it makes the trip that much more rewarding and enjoyable. It adds about an hour and a half to our visit, but we all agree that it's worth it.

We arrived at the Marine Liaison Section and headed over to meet with Evette who is the Distinguished Visitor Coordinator for the hospital. She is a very nice lady and it's nice to meet some of the people who make our visits happen and easier to do. As we all know, there are a lot of people behind the scenes that do what they do to make our visits that much more enjoyable. Thank You, Evette.

She introduced us to our escort for the day, a Navy Corpsman who served with 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Marines in Afghanistan and who is now stationed at Walter Reed. We broke up into two groups, Marc, Father Mike and I in one group and Steve and the two Bob's in the other group. We do this for two reasons. When making a room visit, if all of us are in one room with the wounded and their families, it can be a little tight. The other reason is that this allows us to be able to visit more of the wounded on the floor and that is a good thing. At times I feel that we should make a visit with a platoon size group so we could spend more time during our visits making sure we see everyone who is in the hospital, but that is not possible. It's wishful thinking on my part. I hate to leave knowing that there is a possibility that we have missed someone; plus we are only allotted so much time on the floor, so we need to hustle and make sure we visit as many as we can. There is no goofing off allowed on this day.

Most of you know, even though we are a Marine Corps League organization, we take the opportunity to visit every wounded service member who is in the hospital no matter what uniform they wear. We are all on the same side and we all need to support the families and each and every wounded service member in the hospital while they recover from their wounds. There were approximately 28 wounded with various battle injuries in the hospital and that includes members from all of the military services. Some of them are in the CCU, so we did not get to visit with them. We were able to visit with two Marines and six Soldiers from various units in the main building.

The two Marines we saw were from 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Marines from Camp Pendleton, Ca and the MARSOC (Marine Special Operations Command at Camp Lejeune, NC. The Soldiers we saw were from the following units; Special Forces Group, Fort Bragg, NC, 444<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company, Oswego, NY, 20<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group, Birmingham, Al, B Company, 164<sup>th</sup> Infantry, Fort Stewart, WA & 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, Fort Lewis, WA. We also ran into a few that we have seen on previous visits that were back in the hospital for additional surgeries or complications. They remembered us. Nice to know that we do make a small impression on some of the wounded and their families during our monthly visits....

So as you can see, there were many different units from all over the country. You have to imagine how difficult it may be for some families as they travel all the way to Bethesda, Md to be at bedside with their loved ones. The applications we pass out from the Family & Friends for Freedom Fund organization have helped out many of these families over the years.

As usual Most of the wounded we saw were all injured during some type of IED explosion, but the second wounded Soldier we saw, an Army Special Forces type, he was

lying in the bed with injuries to both legs. We started talking with him to introduce ourselves and after a few minutes I always ask, "Do you mind and would you tell us what happened to you?" Over the years, I have asked this question a few 100 times and not one, and I MEAN, NO ONE has ever said, No. It's almost like they want to tell the world what happened to them for all who would listen. We have had some of them tell us right down to the exact time, weather and who was in front and back of them and describe in vivid detail how they were wounded. It is really amazing to stand there in the room and listen to some of the stories. Well anyway back to the Soldier, he was shot in his left leg and the bullet went through both legs breaking a bone in his right leg. His comment, was, "One Bullet, Four Holes.....I am not sure if he was saying it as a joke or if he meant it as Wow, I can't believe it happened to me; not looking for any pity or complaining one bit. I asked him what is on the horizon for you, without skipping a beat he said, "Walk out of here and get back to my Team".....OOH RAH.....Can't make this up.....

As we always do we introduce ourselves to everyone we meet and give them all the items we that bring down and pass out during our visits. We give out an Afghan blanket with the emblem of the military service they are a member of. On this visit we gave out two Marine afghan & five Army afghan blankets to the wounded we visited with. We also present a Detachment coin, a print from Tom Miller, Marine Dress Blue Teddy for the Mom's wives or kids that may be in the room. We also pass out a few \$50 gift cards and tell them to get some dinner or lunch on our Detachment and the many other organizations that donate to our Marines Care program. As always, the running joke with these gift cards are, "If you buy beer, make sure it's cold because if it is warm, the card will void out". Again we all laughed at this one. To me humor is a big part of Leadership and we need to use it a little more often. The wounded and their families need to smile a little more and hopefully, we are able to make that happen. We also gave him a few small pillows that we get from a special lady in New Jersey, Liz Hackett. I met Liz at an organization called Operation Jersey Cares. She and her friends make these pillows and they are a big help for the wounded who have suffered leg and arm injuries. Sometimes the big bed pillows are too big and cumbersome to move around and the small pillows work just fine and the wounded really appreciate them.

Before we left the main building we stopped by to say hello and enjoy a Pizza lunch with the Occupational Therapists in their office area. We do this every few months or so, and it's a good way for us to visit with the many Therapists we have become friends with over the years and also to introduce ourselves to the new ones who have just arrived. We then headed over to the MATC Clinic.

The MATC clinic was very busy and we all split up and talked for a few minutes to as many as we could. We did not want to talk to them for any length of time as this could have prevented them from doing their Rehab. We passed out the remaining gift cards we had. In total on this visit, we gave out 37 \$50 gift cards (\$1,850.00) ten \$25 (\$250) AMEX gifts cards that Father Mike bought that were donated from his church in Verona, NJ. I also bough along \$690 in gift cards for various places such as Subway, Target, Dunkin Donuts, Wal-Mart, Burger King etc. They were donated by the wife of a

Detachment member who is a member of the Morris Plains Presbyterian Church and they asked for donations for the wounded and their families. A big “Thank You” from our Detachment and I know the Thank You would be even bigger from the wounded and their families we get to visit.

We saw many wounded doing their Rehab exercises during this visit. We also saw a few that we have seen in past visits. We all said hello to each other and tried not to take too much time with them and prevent them from doing their Rehab. We all separated and walked around and said hello and passed out the remaining gift cards. I walked over to a bench to sit next to a wife of a Soldier who was in a harness that hung from the ceiling as he was running around the track and working with a new prosthetic running leg. I asked her, how long had he been using the new leg? She said just a few days. She told me he has two other legs and this one is just for running. He was in an IED explosion and lost most of his right leg, let’s just say, “High Up”. I asked her how he was doing and she said, “Good” and that he was looking to getting back with his unit so he could be with his men after working out the kinks with the running leg.....WOW.....

I gave out the last watch we had to a Marine who we have met on previous visits who is a double leg amputee and who served with 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> Marines, known in the Corps as “The Magnificent Bastards”. I asked him if he had a watch, he said yes, “but it’s broken”. So I gave him the watch with the Marine Corps emblem and told him it was given to me by Detachment Member, Jack Gartenberg an Iwo Jima Veteran. I told him to wear it proudly and he said he would. Before we left the MATC room, I looked over at him and saw the watch on his wrist. Ooh Rah and thank you, Jack.

Just listening to some of the men and women who have been severely wounded, even losing body parts, who say that they can’t wait to get back with their Squad, Platoon or unit is so inspiring. They certainly have the opportunity to retire and never serve again, but a lot of them are adamant about continuing to serve their country and being with their buddies again. They are an absolutely amazing bunch of men and women who wear the uniform of our Military Services today. It was another Great visit and we all look forward to the next one.

We are all proud of the good visits done by this Detachment. The items we pass out are made possible by the many ways we raise money and the donations we receive. They help put a smile on the faces of the wounded and their families during our monthly visits. So whether you are on a trip with us or just donating money or helping out in many ways during the month, I Thank You from all of the wounded and their families.

We also passed out the applications from the Family & Friends for Freedom Fund. Hopefully some of them will send them in so Bob and Kathy’s organization can help them out. I always give out the application last and talk about what this organization is all about. The look on the faces of the family members is amazing at times. It’s like they cannot believe someone they don’t even know and who is from a different military service is doing this for them. A big OOH RAH to Bob and Kathy and all those associated with their organization. I really wish we could be doing more. If you would like to help

out, please do so. Our Detachment's website is listed at the end of the report. The wounded and their families will greatly appreciate it.

To all of you who have donated money and/or purchased items from our Detachment, we thank you for what you do. As you can see, we did a lot during this month's visit. I know I am speaking for all of the wounded and their families we get to visit and help when I say, "A Big Thank You" to all of you who have supported the Slattery Detachment and the many other great organizations we partner with during the year to make this happen. I am proud of being able to represent you during our visits.

When you pass by your place or worship, stop in a say a little, I mean a BIG prayer for all of the families and the wounded we were able to visit. Every little bit helps and we can never do enough for the men and women who serve in the Armed Forces of the good old U.S. of A.

If you are reading this report for the first time and want to know what we do with the money we collect, 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. All it takes for us to make these visits is the time of day. We don't have to drive; we enjoy good company on the ride to and from and meet a lot of GREAT people! It's a great way to spend a day with the men and women who serve in our Armed Forces who have given so much of themselves to protect our freedom and to ensure the freedom of others. OOH RAH...

Please visit our Detachment's "MARINES CARE" web site for additional information.  
[WWW.Marinescare.org](http://WWW.Marinescare.org)

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**"The desire to imitate brave actions will be aroused by praise. And these trifles will diffuse a spirit of emulation among the troops which affects both officers and soldiers and in time will make them invincible."**

**Marshall Comte de Maurice Saxe  
Mes Reveries, 1732**

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