



Walter Reed National Military Medical Center Trip Report for 17 November 2011

Well, here we are a week and half away from Thanksgiving and I have many things to be thankful for and after this past visit, one or two more were added to my list. Four of us from the Slattery Detachment made this month's visit. Detachment members were Marc Purcelli, Eddie Neas, Steve Bliss and Bob Stalzer. Our visits with the wounded and their families are now done between 1400-1600 (that's 2:00pm – 4:00PM for civilians, a little humor on my part) We now leave on the 0830 train from Newark Penn and return from DC and get back into New Jersey around 9:15PM. A long day in a sense, but what a great way to spend a day with the men and women who wear the uniform of our military services and their families.

We arrived at Union Station around 12 noon and met Don Paterson at the hospital. We headed down to the Navy galley/cafeteria to grab a bite for lunch and shoot the breeze and relax for a few before we started our visit.

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 each and every wounded service member in the hospital and their families while they recover from their wounds.

The hospital is shall I say, busy. There were approximately 32 wounded in the hospital and that includes members of from all of the military services. We were able to visit with nine Marines and two Soldiers. We could have seen more but, some were not in their rooms, were in for additional surgeries and or doing Rehab. Marc and I were able to visit with a team leader from the DEA who had a member of one of their FAST teams recovering in the CCU who was wounded in Afghanistan. More on this visit later.

One of the Soldiers we visited with was from Fort Drum in NY was in the 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division. The other Soldier was PFC Derek McConnell of Parsippany, NJ who is with the 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Division. He had been in the CCU for the past few months and it was good to finally see him. We have tried to help out his family while he has been in the hospital and hopefully we will be able to do a little more in the coming months. The nine Marines we saw were from the following units. 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines and Headquarters Company, Regimental Combat Team 8. These units are based out of Camp Lejeune, NC, 29 Palms, Ca and Hawaii.

The first three Marines Marc and I saw all had lost both of their legs due to IED explosions. We asked all of them what had happened and they all had almost the same answer. They were on a foot patrol and units from Combat Engineers were sweeping the area in front of them when the IED went off. I asked how is that possible if they were using the mine detection gear they have. Almost all answers were the same. The IED's are a newer type. They have less metal in them or none at all. Even the filament (wire) is a composite type material. So, some of these IED's go undetected.

We were asked to first visit with a young Marine who lost both legs and had injuries to both hands. The Commandant, General Amos was going to present him with his Purple Heart and we did not want to be in the way. We walked in and met his mother and girl friend and then told them who we were and why we were here. This Marine was on his second deployment. He will have months of Rehab in front of him. He was a member of 3th Battalion, 7th Marines and from what we were being told there are a few other members of that unit in various parts of the hospital. They have been hit pretty hard in Afghanistan. We gave him the Marine Corps Blanket, \$150 in gift cards, Detachment coin, two of the Dress Blue Bears for his Mom and girlfriend along with everything else we give out during our visits. They appreciated that we took the time to stop by and say hello. As I reached out to grab the Mom's hand, She, said, No. "You need to get a hug" So she hugged all of us. You can go in a bar and someone buys you a drink or a restaurant and someone picks up the tab after you eat and you say to yourself, Man that was nice. But of all the things we think are nice, there is nothing like getting a hug from a family member whose son, daughter, husband or wife is lying in bed recovering from their wounds. And they say Thank You to us. We can never thank them enough for all they have gone through the past few and coming months ahead. As I have always said, "what a great way to spend a day".

Steve and Bob visited first with a Marine who been severely wounded and lost both of his legs, let's just say very high up. Marc went in next and after I did some running around I was asked to go in to say hello. This Marine was sitting up in his bed like nothing was wrong, telling all of us what had happened to him and you almost got the impression he sprained his ankle running around the play ground. It amazes me to be able to listen to some of the stories we are told by these men who have been wounded in combat. What a brave bunch of men and women who were the uniform today of our US Military. I know we have all been told about the "Greatest Generation" from World War II, the Forgotten War in Korea and the Viet Nam Veterans of years ago, They all had their unsung Hero's during each time period, but I tell you what, for the past 5 & 1/2 years I have been doing these visits to the hospitals, the men and women I have met Stand as Tall and are as Proud of any of those who have gone before us and wore the uniform. Semper Fi and OOH RAH.

This Marine's Mother would find us later on the floor and ask us to all sign her son's book, which we all gladly did. BTW, we signed the page just after KID ROCK who made a hospital visit the day before. Nice to be able to see and hear about some of entertainment folks coming into pay a visit to see the wounded.

The last place Marc and I visited was to a DEA Agent who had been wounded in Afghanistan. He was in the CCU. We did not get into his room but spoke with one of the DEA FAST Team Leaders. I gave him an Army Blanket and two \$50 gift cards and asked him to pass it onto the family. He thanked us, but before we left he asked us to visit a Marine who was also wounded and was on the same helicopter as his friend. We looked for him, but could not find out where he was. Just another good story about making a visit to someone and then having them ask you, to go visit someone else who has been wounded. We have all heard this saying, "There is no "I" in Team" and during our visits we see it and hear it all the time. As I have said many times before. A great way to spend a day and this is another example.

We are all proud of the good visits done by this Detachment. The items we pass out that 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.

I met with a lady named Marcia who is the wife of a Detachment member. They are in a local church group that donated \$675 worth of gift cards. Just a side note, their son is a Pilot with the US Marine Corps based in Okinawa, Japan right now. OOH RAH. The gift cards are for places such as Dunkin Donuts, Subway, Target and Barnes & Noble to name a few. We took them down with us and passed them out during our visit. They also gave me a bunch of book marks and get well cards from the church. Well, all the gift cards are gone. With a Dunkin Donuts and Subway in the hospital, they will get used fast. A Big Thank you from the Slattery Detachment for your generous gift and time you spent to make this happen.

We passed out seven watches with the Marine Corps emblem on the face. We even gave one to a Soldier and he took it. I told him, "I know you don't have one of these". He laughed.

We also gave out 38 \$50 gift cards (\$1,900 & with the \$675 from the church group a total of \$2,575) cards, nine Marine Corps blankets and three Army blankets. We also gave out the Marine Dress Blue Teddy Bears to family members. They as always are a big hit. 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. A big OOH RAH to the both of them.

So 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. Please don't forget the families of the 30 services members killed in Afghanistan this past weekend.

So 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

"Those who expect you to reap the blessings of freedom, must, like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it"

Thomas Paine
The American Crisis, 12 September 1777

Semper Fidelis,

Eddie Neas
SgtMaj/ USMCR/RET
Alpha 1/1, Viet Nam