



## Bethesda Medical Center Trip Report

We had a great trip this month and as the holiday season nears, things like this should remind all of us how grateful we should be to live in the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave. Six of us met at Newark Penn Station and headed down to Washington, DC leaving at 0730.

Our visit this month was to Bethesda Naval Hospital and the first item on the list was to attend the barbecue at Mercy Hall for the Marine Liaison Staff and the out patients at the hospital. The Department of the Marine Corps League in Maryland and the members of the L/Cpl Robert J Slattery Detachment in New Jersey have been hosting this for the past four months. This allows all of us to talk and say hello again to all organizations and people who are making these trips worthwhile. We can tell a few war stories about what we did in the Corps and most importantly what we are all doing today to help the young men and women heal from their wounds. And yes, even get a few laughs about what we do now. OOH RAH.

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

Father Mike Hanly  
Bob Stalzer  
Eddie Neas  
Marc Purcelli  
Steve Bliss  
Jim Heien

Last month I said we had were having the third and final barbecue, well I lied or someone told me a lie. LOL. Whatever the reason it was worth it, because this month, Tony's crew or shall I say Squad broke out steaks for one and all to enjoy. Again a big hearty thank you and Semper Fi to Tony, J. R. and the rest of the Department of Maryland Marine Corps Leaguers who have done a fine job setting up and preparing the chow for all of us to enjoy the past few months. OOH RAH.....

Don Patterson as usual was walking around and taking pictures as we spent about 1.5 hours at the barbecue. I know the pictures will be up on the web site and we will all be able to print off one or two of them and add them to the "I LOVE ME WALL" or scrapbook we have at home.

We then headed up to the fifth floor around 1315 to start our visit. We were able to visit six Marines and one Army Soldier who were on the floor. I asked Tony if anyone from the Maryland group would like to go with us and visit. He introduced me to a gentleman and of course I forgot his name, but I was glad he came along. Tony gave us a quilt that someone had won in a raffle at an American Legion or VFW meeting a week or so ago. That person asked him to give it to one of the wounded men on the floor. We gave it to the LtCol we would visit last on the floor. The six of us split into two groups and we started our visits.

The first room we walked into there were two Marines from the same unit (1st Amphibious Assault Battalion) who had been wounded together and now were sharing a room. We talked to them and the family members who were in the room. We gave them a little talk about who, what and where we are and why we do this. Sometimes we all get to see that look on their faces and in their eyes of their families also that they can't believe we are doing this. And I think to myself, Man if we could only do more.

The next Marine we visited was from 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marines that is normally stationed in Hawaii. We had met his mother at the barbecue and I told her we would visit him at the end of our visit so she could finish her food at the barbecue. When we arrived at his room he was not there. He was walking around the hospital getting some exercise. It was good to see that. It's amazing that most of the wounded we get to visit try to do a lot of things on their own. They really don't want help or look at themselves as being wounded and not being able to do day-to-day things. To me the staff of Doctor's, Nurse's and the physical therapy people do a tremendous job helping them while they recover. Another big thing that helps is that they have their families in the room with them. This has to help the entire family heal and recover together.

The next Marine we were looking to see was a LtCol. There was a speech therapist with him so we had to wait. I asked our escort if there were any Soldiers, Sailors or Air Force personnel on the floor. He told us there was one Soldier and I asked him to find out from his family if we could visit him. His family said yes and all seven of us entered the room.

We spent the next 20 minutes or so talking to this Soldier, his mother and a friend about why we were there. The Soldier was part of a U.S. Army Stryker brigade and had been wounded while on a patrol. His mother very much appreciated that that we took the time to visit her and her son. Yes he got an Army blanket and all of the other stuff we had brought down from New Jersey. We even gave his mother and her friend a Marine Teddy Bear in dress blues. That put a bigger smile on their faces and they thanked us one more time. We all wished them well and gave him a Semper Fi and Ooh Rah from a bunch of Marines as we left the room.

We headed back over to the LtCol's room and as we all walked into his room we met his wife, mother and father. The LtCol was part of a unit that trains the Iraqi Army and had been in country for about 7 months. He was due to rotate home in about 7-8 weeks.

Needless to say a tough visit as he had just been moved from the ICU on Monday. This LtCol has a tough road ahead of him and I ask that all of you say a little, no say a Big prayer the next time you are in church or just when you have a moment during the day. Some of the men and women we visit are going to need as much help as they can get in the coming months. The family of this LtCol all appreciated it that we took the time to stop by and say hello. We cannot do enough as far as I am concerned.

Just a short note on the Birthday Ball I attended on 6 November at the Union Jack Restaurant in Bethesda. Linda, GySgt Monaco, his brother Dominic and Doc Patel from NJ drove down and celebrated the 233<sup>rd</sup> birthday our the Corps with the Marine Liaison section, Department of Maryland MCL and quite a few wounded Marines we have visited in the past few months. It was good to see them up and around in Dress Blues and not in the hospital attire they have been wearing the past few months.

On Marine I saw was 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Borden, he was in a wheel chair in Dress Blues and looked the best I have seen him look and feel since we met about a year ago. Cpl Sharp was there also. He is the Marine who escorted us around last month. He is full of energy and motivation. I was told he was transferred down to another hospital in Florida to help in his recovery. Semper Fi, Cpl Sharp. The Marines from the Slattery Detachment will miss you. This comment needs to be put in all of my reports as sometimes the people who help the wounded men and women recover every night and day, most likely don't get enough credit.

So, a big time OOH RAH and SEMPER FI needs to go the Medics, Corpsman, Doctors, Nurses and the rest of the medical staff at both hospitals. The Family & Friends for Freedom Fund, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society and the many other organizations. They all do their part so these young men and women can survive these unbelievable wounds.

**“The most precious commodity with which the Army deals, is the individual soldier who is the heart and soul of our combat forces”**

General J. Lawton Collins

That's it for this months visit. Next visit is scheduled Wednesday, 17 December 2008. Happy Thanksgiving to all of you and your families.

*Semper Fidelis,*

**Eddie Neas  
SgtMaj/ USMCR/RET**