



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

Walter Reed National Military Medical Center Trip Report for 18 December 2013

This report covers our Detachment's last visit on Wednesday 18 December 2013. There were two Detachment members and one of my friends making his first visit. Marc Purcell, Eddie Neas and my friend Matt Casey from Clark, NJ.

We all met at Newark Penn Station and took the 0620 train and arrived at Union Station in DC. We then jumped on a local train, called the Red Line and arrived at the hospital around 1115.

The last hospital visit was made in July but during the past few months we have made two trips to Andrews Air Force Base. We get to meet and welcome the wounded and those injured in accidents and even those who have to return to the US of A for medical issues. Most of the ones we see at Andrews will catch a flight the following morning and be sent to a local military facility closer to their home or the military base they are assigned to. This is a lot easier on some families who are located all over the country. Those who go to Walter Reed will leave the following morning also.

We arrived at the hospital and talked with a few Marines in the Marine Liaison Section. We wanted to know if there were any wounded on the 4th floor that we could visit. They said yes, five Marines were on the floor and most of them were from the same battalion, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines. We were asked to visit with a SSgt who was in a room at the end of the floor. His wife had just given birth a few days earlier. So we all thought this would be a great way to start off the visit. Unfortunately, he was in the O.R. and the rest of his family was not in the room. That was too bad. This is how it goes sometimes. You look to visit with someone and they are either at another location for Rehab or getting additional surgery as they recover from their wounds. Life has a strange way of having people deal with everything. On one hand you celebrate the birth of a son or daughter and on the other hand you have to deal with a family member who has been wounded in combat.

We walked into the next room of a Marine with his mother by his side. Also in the room was an Aunt of the Marine next door who was in the same platoon and they both were wounded together. Her nephew the Marine was sleeping so she decided to visit us. We introduced ourselves and gave him a few \$50 gift cards, Marine Corps watch and all the other items we pass out. Don Patterson had already given him a blanket earlier in the week, so that was not needed.

We all talked for a while and I then asked him how he was wounded. He told us he was on a foot patrol and was shot. I asked him where as he had the blanket over his lower part of the body. Without skipping a beat he gets ready to whip off his blanket so he could show us where. I said there is no need to do that, his mother rolled her eyes as this had to be tough for her, but this is how some of these men and women are about being wounded. It's almost like, it's no big deal. He has been in the Marines for about 15 months. This was his first deployment and he had been in Afghanistan only two months. We wished him well, said Semper Fi, shook his hand and left to visit with his buddy next door. He was still sleeping, so we started talking with his aunt. Her sister, his mother, was somewhere else in the hospital. We gave her the same stuff we always give out including the \$50 gift cards and other items. We spent about 15 minutes talking with her and found out she is retired from the NYPD. I asked her where she lived and worked and she said she lived in Queens and worked in Manhattan for many years. She was a really nice lady and I am glad we took the time to talk. She thanked us and we wished each other Merry Christmas and we left.

We wanted to see if the Marine who was in the O.R. was back in his room. He was not so we went to get a bite to eat before we headed to the MATC location. We were walking past a room and on the door was an Army Flag and the door was open. A Soldier was sitting in a wheelchair. So we stopped and asked if we could come in a say hello. He said yes and we all went in. He was getting ready to leave the hospital and head home so we didn't want to keep him any longer. We gave him an Army Blanket, Detachment coin and a few gift cards and wished him well. He had lost one leg below the knee and was with a unit from the 2nd Infantry Division. The two other rooms we wanted to visit were empty. One patient was in rehab and the other was somewhere else in the hospital. On the way to the elevator we stopped by to talk with gentleman who was outside a room with the door closed. It had an Air Force flag and the name plate showed he was a Retired T/Sgt. We said hello and found out that the man outside was his son. His Dad was in for surgery and we talked for a few more minutes, gave him the Air Force Blanket we had, a few gift cards said Merry Christmas and wished him well. His eyes got a little wet and he thanked us for stopping by. Needless to say, but this was a good visit on the 4th floor.

We headed down to the cafeteria and grabbed something to eat and left for the MATC location. The wounded start coming in for Rehab at 1300 and we wanted to be on time. The three of us stuck together and visited with as many as we could while they were doing the rehab exercises.

We got to the MATC location and just about 1300 the wounded started to come in. The first Soldier we talked with was a double leg amputee and he just got back from a five mile run. Now I know most of you have seen on TV the device that allows leg amputees to run like they did when they had their real legs. This Soldier sat on the end of bed and we must have talked with him for 20 minutes or so and to be honest, we could have stayed with him all afternoon. We asked him how he was doing (and he is sitting there with both legs amputated below the knee) and said, "Life is Good." My friend Matt, who was here for the first time, could not believe he just said that.

That's how most of the wounded we see are able to handle these injuries and look to get back into a normal way of life. We talked about my time in Viet Nam and he said as most of the ones we visited say, "We had it rough back then". I shot back and said, "No rougher then what you have today". He nodded his head and said OK. I told him that was my war and today, Afghanistan is your war. He asked me for a few good books about the Viet Nam war and I recommended a few. Rumor of War and Marine Sniper were a few that came to my mind at the moment. He whipped out his cell phone jumped on the Internet and looked up the books online and said he would go get them to read. We talked about how he was wounded and was in the future for him. He had about 19 years in and wanted to stay in the Army, but not sure at what capacity. We all shook hands, said Semper Fi and Ooh Rah and of course he came back with the Army Hooah. We both left with a lot of mutual respect for each other. These visits do us from the Slattery Detachment a lot of good also. I am glad we can all do this.

We visited with another Soldier who had lost one leg and was working on a walking obstacle type Rehab. There were about ten cones, six inches high on the floor separated about a foot apart. He would walk down one side using his good leg and tapped on the top of the cone. When he got to the end, he would turn around and do the same type of movement but now using his prosthetic leg and touch the top of the cone. When he was done I asked him which leg was the toughest to do and he said the prosthetic leg was the hardest because when he touches the top of the cone, he cannot feel it. He was doing this for balance and coordination. His wife was behind him sitting on a bench and we gave her a few gift cards and other items we had and wished them a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. This Soldier had scars up and down his body to include his head. He was in a severe IED explosion, but looked to be on the road to recovery. A long one, but at least he was on it. The next Soldier we visited was with his wife and their three month old baby. Of course we gave her and their son two of the Teddy Bears in Dress Blues. He was doing his Rehab exercises and talking and helping his friends with their Rehab so we did not want to take up too much of his time. He thanked us and wished him and his wife well with their new addition. The gift cards we gave out were a big hit and a surprise to many of them. I am glad we could help them out a week before Christmas.

Of course we told everyone who we gave the gift card to, that there was only one stipulation: "If you buy warm beer, the cards would void out". They all laughed and so did we. One Marine who was a Viet Nam Vet and had just lost his leg to diabetes was on a treadmill and said, "Oh, you don't have to worry about that one". He even asked if he could buy some Jim Beam's with them. I said yes, you can and you can buy a few of them too, LOL. This is an amazing bunch of Men and Women who wear the uniform of our Military Services. We all feel honored and are glad we can make a little difference to them and their families with what we pass out during our visits.

We visited with a few other Soldiers and gave away a few more gift cards, Detachment coins and brochures. They all thanked us for stopping by and a few were amazed that we Marines were taking the time to visit with Soldiers in the Army.

Hey, it's what we do at the Slattery Detachment. We are all on the same team and we all need to be there for each other, no matter what uniform they may wear.

We passed out 15 \$50 gift cards totaling \$850 during this visit. We also gave out another \$350 in gift cards for various places such as Dunkin Donuts, Subway, Walmart, Starbucks and various other places. These cards were donated by the Morris Plains Presbyterian Church and they have done so a few times in the past. This was very well appreciated by the families we visited. One comment was, Oh "Subway, I'll think I'll go down stairs and grab me a sandwich now." We gave out one Marine Corps, two Army and one Air Force blankets, one Marine Corps watch and a bunch of the bears in Dress Blues. We also passed out a few applications from the Family & Friends for Freedom Fund. They are always appreciated by all who received them. We were able to visit with two Marines, seven Soldiers, one retired Air Force and one retired Marine during this visit. Thanks to all of the people and organizations who have donated to our Detachments Marines Care program over the past year. It does make a BIG difference. 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 smiles 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. To all of you who have donated money and/or purchased items from our Detachment, we thank you for what you do.

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 do a lot during our visits and wish we could do more. I am proud of being able to represent you during our visits. 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

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“You got to set a good example, too. You can’t just talk a good line. You can fool your seniors and peers sometimes, but you can’t fool the subordinates. There are a thousand little things that only the men are going to see. After six months, they know you. They’ll either respect you and do anything for you, or they will just tolerate you”.

Lieutenant General James H. Merryman

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