



Bethesda Hospital Trip Report

Finally after a few snow storms and trip cancellations, we were able to resume our monthly visits to Bethesda. We have not made a visit since November of 2010. With the Holidays and weather it just did not happen. But we are back on track and what a good feeling it was to get back. Five members of the Slattery Detachment and guests made this month's trip. Detachment members were Marc Purcelli, Eddie Neas, Chris Holleran and Steve Bliss. We also had the pleasure of the company of Tom Phillips, a good friend of Detachment member Phil Doyle, on his first visit to Bethesda. Welcome Tom and more on him in a few.

We left from Newark Penn Station at 0730 and headed down to Union Station in Washington, DC. We arrived at the Bethesda Naval Hospital around 1145 and headed down to the cafeteria to grab a quick bite for lunch before we started our visit. We met up with Don Paterson and JR for chow as usual. We also met a few members of the Department of Maryland Marine Corps League who were there on their weekly visit.

We checked into the Marine Corps Liaison Section on the first floor and headed up to start our visit. As it has been for the past few months, there were many wounded or injured on the floor. With the recent events taking place in Afghanistan, Bethesda has been busy. In the hospital there was a total of approximately 23 military, 19 Marines, one Soldier, two Navy and one Air Force. We were able to see 8 Marines and one Soldier. Some of the reasons we could not visit all of the wounded were due to them being at rehab or having additional surgeries.

Since the Department of Maryland had started their visit on the floor, we decided to stay together as a group of five. You know just a little larger than a Fire Team, OOH RAH. The Marines and Corpsman we saw on this visit were from the following units, 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, 3rd Battalion, 9th Marines and 1st EOD Company from Camp Pendleton. Six of the eight Marines we visited were from 1/8 & 3/5. These two Battalions have been in the thick of fighting the past few months in Afghanistan. Keep them and all who serve in your prayers the next few months.

The first two Marines we saw in the room were both from 1/8 and had severe injuries. Each had lost part of one leg from IED blasts. One of the Marines we saw was on his, get this, EIGHTH deployment, yes, I said eight. They both had family in the room and we spent more than a few minutes talking to all of them. They all appreciated that we took the time to visit.

We gave them all of the items we pass out such as the Afghan blankets, brochure, watches, Marine Dress Blue Bears, prints from Tom Miller and a few \$50 gift cards. They also received an application from the Family& Friends for Freedom Fund.

We made a visit to one room where a Marine had returned from surgery and was in and out of it due to the medication he had received for surgery. We were able to talk to his wife and give her all of the stuff we pass out during our visits. She was very appreciative and thanked us for do what we do.

There is always one visit that hits home and makes us all feel proud of what we do as Detachment members. This trip we had two. We met a mother of a Marine who originated from the Ukraine years ago and who now lives in Kansas along with all of her family. Her son was in surgery, so we did not get to see him, but we had a great visit with her. When we started to give her all of the stuff we give out, her eyes started to water and she became emotional, but that was OK, because we did too. She explained to us she could not believe all the help and support she was receiving at home, in the hospital and now from people she did not even know. We then gave her the application for the Family and Friends for Freedom Fund and let's just say it got a little wetter in the room. She thanked each and every one of us and I need to pass that all on to all of you who help us with visits or help during the fund raisers during the year. MAN, makes you think what we could do all over the world if we would just help each other out.

We had just walked off the floor and headed back down to the 1st floor to make a quick PX run before we took the train back home. As we were standing outside the Liaison office, I saw a Marine sitting in a wheel chair who was a double leg amputee. How did I know he was a Marine, well he had a high and tight haircut and he was sitting straight up almost like he was at attention. OK, he also had on a Marine Corps T-shirt, OOH RAH. We walked over to him and asked him if he had a few minutes so we could stop and say hello. He said sure and his mother said sure. We gave him all the stuff we give out and then I asked him what had happened to him. For about the next 5-10 minutes he described in detail how he had been wounded just a few short weeks ago. As I said earlier, he lost both legs below the knee; he had a metal rod sticking out from his waist and had shrapnel wounds to both arms. But he sat in his wheelchair and told us in a very sharp and focused voice of what happened. And almost showing us how far the rod when down to his leg, he then said oh yea, I have an 8 inch scar from front to back from way below my belly button, if you know what I mean. I told him, "it's amazing how focused you are after what happened to you and all of the wounds you have. "You are talking to us like you skinned your knee and fell off the monkey bars". He said, "Nope, Not Monkey Bars, it just what I do as a Marine". He was clean shaved, sitting up tall and waiting for the Commandant to come by and present him his Purple Heart. Like I have said before, where do these Men come from? I guess it starts at home and then I would think Boot Camp plays a big part in their lives as they move forward. For all of us who have been to Parris Island or San Diego for Boot Camp, "We know the feeling" That is where it all starts. Semper Fi and a loud Ooh Rah to all of the wounded we visited on this trip. It was motivating and I am glad we got to see them. Never been to a visit, then contact me and lets plan something in the coming months.

I need to tell you a little about Tom Phillips who made his first visit to Bethesda. He brought along a nice large humidor of handmade cigars from the Dominican Republic. Now, I don't smoke, but he had cigars in three flavors, Mild, Medium and Strong and they were a nice size also. Almost made me want to light up one myself,,,,NOT, LOL. Every room we went into he asked if they smoked and if they said yes, he opened up the humidor and let them pick out what they wanted. By the time he left I would have to say the humidor was empty. The last Marine we saw in the wheelchair said his buddies are coming to visit him and they smoked, so Tom gave him enough for them also. A very gracious way to say thank you to the men who serve in our military. Thank you Tom for all that you did on this visit.

When you pass by your place or worship, stop in a say a little, I mean a BIG prayer for this family and all of the families 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.

We passed out eight watches, 21 \$50 gift cards, three Marine Corps and one Army blanket. We also gave out the Marine Dress Blue Teddy Bears to family members and they as always are a big hit. So to all of you who have donated money and/or purchased items from our Detachment, we thank you for what you do. We also gave 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 if you are reading this report for the first time and want to know what we do with the money we collect and where it goes, 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...

“At West Point, much of the history we teach was made by the people we taught.”

U.S. Military Academy Poster

Semper Fidelis,

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