



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

Walter Reed National Military Medical Center Trip Report for 20 March 2014

This report covers our Detachment's last visit on Thursday, 20 March 2014. There were five Detachment members Marc Purcell, Lee Minton, Kevin Meara, Eddie Neas and Detachment Commandant, Keith Butler. We also had the pleasure of the company a friend from one of the organizations we partner with during the year. Monika Flaherty of Operation Jersey Cares made her first visit and you will hear in her own words how much she enjoyed the visit.

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 December 2013. Casualties have been very light and I only mean that in the amount of how many have been wounded the past few months. This does not in any way take away from the sacrifice those few who have been wounded. Some have been severely wounded and will require many surgeries and many hours of Rehab in the coming months. There are approximately 35,000 American Service members of all our military services currently in Afghanistan. They are supposed to be there until the end of this year. Please keep them and all who are still deployed no matter where they may be around the world in your prayers.

We arrived at the hospital and moved to the Marine Liaison Section to hook up with Don Patterson. We wanted to make sure we could get to visit with a local New Jersey Marine who was severely wounded a few weeks ago by an IED explosion. We were also asked by Tom Cunningham of Operation Jersey Cares to visit with a Soldier from the Army's 3rd Special Forces Group. He was wounded by an RPG (Rocket Propelled Grenade), his best friend was killed, and five others were wounded. He had already been moved from the hospital to another military hospital closer to where he was stationed. There were four on the floor that were recently sent to the hospital, so we collected all of our stuff and headed out the door. Just outside the door, we ran into a Marine Viet Nam veteran who we met at the MATC location back in December. He remembered us so we stopped to say hello. He is being treated for diabetes and lost one of his legs below the knee due to this disease. He was telling us it may be related to an Agent Orange exposure while he was in Viet Nam. We gave him a few of the gift cards we had and wished him well and took off to the 4th floor.

There were three Marines and one Navy Corpsman on the floor and all of them were from the same Battalion, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines stationed at Camp Lejeune, NC. There was also one Marine from Camp Pendleton, but we did not get to visit with him as he was in the O.R. getting additional surgery. As we were standing in the hall near the Nurses station, the Marine from New Jersey we were asked to see was being wheeled back from the O.R. and the look in his eyes said, "He was in no shape for any visitors". So we said a Semper Fi and watched him go into his room. We then started talking with a SSgt and his wife who was from 1/9. He had recently been wounded. We asked him if we could get a few minutes of his time. He said sure. We introduced ourselves and told him the, who, what and why we were there and gave him all the items we always pass out on our visits. He thanked us for what we were doing and even told us to go look up one of his buddies down the hall. Unfortunately he was not in his room. We gave his wife the application from the Family & Friends for Freedom Fund and tears started to well up in her eyes. She thanked us for what we were doing. I asked her if she knew the Marine wife from New Jersey who was in the room with her husband and she said yes. I asked her if she could go ask her to come out so we could speak with her. She said yes and went and got her to come out. We talked to her for a few minutes and gave her all the stuff we had with us including the application from the Family & Friends for Freedom Fund. We did not want to keep her away from her husband too long. She thanked us and left. I returned to the Marine still standing near the Nurses station and looked at his wrist and saw he had no watch on. Marc went and got him one of the Marine watches we had and gave it to him. He smiled and thanked us again. We give out the watches because most of the wounded we get to see have not received their personal effects as of that day. A watch is one of those items that almost everyone misses when it's not on their wrist. We must have been talking with him and his wife for about 20 minute, we were just standing in the hall like we were part of the hospital staff. We shook hands, said Semper Fi and left to make another room visit. A great way to start off the visit.

We headed down the hall and two of the Marines we wanted to see were not in their rooms. The last room we looked at had the Navy Corpsman. We knocked on the door and asked if we come in and say hello. He said "Sure" and all six of us walked in to say hello. He was wounded by an IED explosion and had two leg injuries, one which would require some more surgery. As always, we told him who we are and why we were there. He was originally from California, but was stationed at Camp Lejeune. We gave him all the items we had to include the Detachment challenge coin, Navy Blanket, prints from Tom Miller, gift cards and thank you cards or letters from local schools in New Jersey. I then looked at his wrist, He had no watch. So I asked Kevin if he would get one of the watches we had and as we gave it to him. I told him, "I know you don't have one of these. He saw the Marine Corps emblem on it and laughed and said, "Don't worry, I will wear it". We shook hands, Said Semper Fi and gave his wife a few of the Bears we had and she smiled. We all left and headed down to get some chow.

After we ate, I wanted to see if we could get a visit to the MATC location even though we were not scheduled. Sometimes if there are too many people making visits, the wounded are distracted from their Rehab exercises while everyone is talking. That is the last thing we want to do. Since this was the first visit for both Lee and Monika, I took

each one of them inside, one at a time to show them the facility. We did not talk with any of the wounded who were doing their Rehab. I explained to them what was available to the wounded during their Rehab session. Hopefully on the next visit we will get inside.

As we walked outside, Monika asked if we would meet one of her friends who is a Police Officer in the area. I said, of course, so she contacted him and we met a few minutes later outside the MATC room. We talked for a few minutes and I gave him one of the Detachment coins and thanked him for what he is doing for the people of Maryland. I think Marc was looking for a PBA card or a get out of jail free card for future use, we all laughed, but he may need it, LOL. We invited him to make a visit with us in the future and he said he would like to do that.

As we were getting ready to leave, a Marine walked out of the MATC and we locked eyeballs on each other. He was in his green PT gear so I walked over and asked him if he had a few minutes so we could talk with him. He said, "Yes". We introduced ourselves and told him why we were here. He was with 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marines stationed at Camp Lejeune, NC and had been wounded in Afghanistan. We gave him a Marine Corps blanket and watch, Detachment coin and all of the other items we had. I asked him who was with him while he was in the hospital and he said, his mother, so I gave him a few of the gift cards and told him to take his mother to dinner tonight. He smiled and said thank you. I also gave him the Detachment brochure as we do with everyone. We always tell them, we're not asking you to join or sign up, but take a look at our web site to see what we do. We shook hands, said Semper Fi and started to head for the train station for our trip back to New Jersey. It was a great way to end the visit. We opened some eyes about who we are and why we do this and got to meet some great people along the way.

Before we left the hospital, Lee Minton wanted to walk by and take a look at a location he was in the hospital for almost 15 months back in the 60's. Now I am not saying the place was like it was when he was there, but he wanted to take a look. So we all headed over to building known as the Tower. Of course it did not look the same, but he asked if he could go down a floor ALONE and take a look to see if the ward was still there. I was reluctant at first and did not want him to get lost for another 15 months, LOL. So he went down and came back a few minutes later and said there is nothing but office space where he used to be. But he was happy he had a chance to take a peek. We all, at times, would like to go back in time and look at places we have been and hope that place would look exactly like it did when we were there in our younger days, but to no avail. Those days just stay in our memory bank and when we think about we smile a little more. Our visits to see the wounded will sometimes bring back some good memories for all us who are on these visits, making it a very worthwhile trip in many ways.

The wounded we get to visit with are 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. 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 we may wear.

Here are personal comments from Monika who made her first visit with us to Walter Reed. What we see and do during our visits is one thing, but what we hear from people who take the time to see what we all are trying to do, touches all of us and I wanted to share her words with you.

As requested I am gathering my thoughts about our visit to Bethesda Military Hospital yesterday. First and foremost, I must thank you Sir and Keith Butler for this life changing opportunity. I simply cannot put into words how this experience has affected me. Since becoming involved in volunteer work, I knew immediately that I gravitated toward Military organizations and was very blessed to have found Operation Jersey Cares. It has given me an opportunity to "Give Back". It has also proved to be invaluable for me to meet others, such as yourselves, who give so freely of themselves to help our Troops in any way needed. I knew immediately that visiting our wounded Heroes was something I wholeheartedly wanted to do. I must admit, I was filled with anxiety and trepidation in how I would react to seeing these "kids" some of them younger than my daughter wounded. Yes, it was difficult, however the atmosphere yesterday radiated nothing but "positive". The wives I met left me inspired. They were young, and very stoic ready to get on with life, even though Life shall never be the same for them, their husbands and families. I realize it is important to remain positive in order for their husbands to get their lives back to a place where they can heal and get on as best they can, although forever changed. Pity, certainly cannot serve them well. I also left yesterday with the utmost respect and admiration for all you Marines, men I now consider friends. What you have done and continue to do is nothing short of heroic. Not one of you showed any signs of personal ego and clearly are there to help others. In your eyes, I saw many things....Compassion, concern, determination, humor and most of all Pride! I am honored for being included in this very special endeavor.

We passed out 21 \$50 gift cards totaling \$1,150 during this visit. We also gave Don a few blankets that were donated by Cort Millar & Mike Rung of American Legion Post #155 and a Boy Scout Leader who both work for BAE Systems. Nine blankets were donated by them and I know that they will greatly be appreciated by those who will receive them. We gave out three Marine Corps and one Navy blanket to the Corpsman we saw earlier along with three Marine Corps watches 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 three Marines and the one Navy Corpsman during this visit. Thanks to all of the people and organizations who have donated to our Detachment's, 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 other ways during the month, “I” Thank You from all of the wounded service members and their families.

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. 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 *Pictures of this visit are posted on the website.*

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“Thinking always of trying to do more brings a state of mind in which nothing seems impossible”.

Henry Ford

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