



Walter Reed National Military Medical Center Trip Report for 17 April 2012

Three members of the Slattery Detachment made this month's visit. Detachment members were Marc Purcelli, Eddie Neas & Chris Holleran. We left an hour earlier than usual as we were going to make our first visit to the MATC location (Military Advanced Training Center) More on this visit later. All went well on the train ride down and we arrived at the MATC location at Walter Reed around 1100 so we could see the facility. Hopefully we would be able to talk with some of the wounded who were being treated for their injuries and/or doing their Rehab to recover from them as well.

We were able to visit with three wounded Marines and spent a few minutes with each of them to let them know why we were here and also to hear their story too. We made sure that we did not interrupt or prevent them from doing their Rehab. The MATC facility is very clean, well organized and well staffed. A few family members were there also and watched their loved ones doing Rehab. The three that we did talk with were all wounded by roadside IED's while on a foot patrol. One of the Marines was a member of the last unit I served with in the Marine Corps Reserve before I retired, 4th Civil Affairs Group. He had been severely wounded, lost his left leg and his right leg was very badly injured. He had just recently had surgery and had his entire right knee replaced. He was working on doing his exercises and moving his right leg up and down and even apologized for putting his foot near my face, Can You Imagine That? He lost his left leg and his right one is badly injured and he is apologizing to me. Unbelievable. One of the other Marines was in Afghanistan for about six weeks and his one leg was badly injured. He has been in the Corps for 17 months and was wounded on his ten month anniversary of entering the Corps last year. We gave all of them a few gift \$50 gift cards and a Detachment coin. Don had already given them the Marine Corps blanket on a previous visit.

The MATC is a 31,000-square-foot, \$10 million center that opened last year after the merger of the two hospitals. It offers some of the most state-of-the-art care found anywhere in the world. The facility combines office and counseling space with workout facilities, data gathering, high-tech simulators, and even a family lounge with a full kitchen. It is designed to bring together all the hospital's elements of advanced amputee care, but much of it also will benefit other patients, such as those suffering from traumatic brain injuries or post-traumatic stress disorder. The hospital's gait lab has nearly doubled its size in the new building. The lab electronically records patients' movements while wearing prosthetic devices to give feedback to the patients and specialists on rehabilitation efforts.

It can now record movements from 23 camera angles, up from eight, and has six force plates, up from four, that measure pressure put on the ground as steps are taken. It also added a treadmill built into the floor that will allow specialists, for the first time, to collect force plate data from soldiers while running. No doubt we will be back to make a visit to the facility again.

We then headed over to the main building to grab some chow before we started our visit to the wounded that are in their rooms. We headed down to the Navy galley/cafeteria to grab a bite for lunch and shoot the breeze and relax for a few.

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.

This was our first visit since February as no wounded were being sent to Walter Reed. As you know from reading the newspapers or watching TV, it has been calm in Afghanistan and Iraq the past month or so. Hopefully it will stay that way. The hospital head count for the month of April was about the same as January; light and that is always good news. Some of the wounded in the hospital were back for additional surgeries or treatment. There were approximately 30 wounded with various battle injuries in the hospital and that includes members from all of the military services. We were able to visit with two Marines and three Soldiers during this visit. The three Marines we saw were from the following units, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines stationed at Camp Pendleton, Ca. and 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion from Camp Lejeune, NC. The three Soldiers we saw were from the 95th Engineer Company from Schofield Barracks in Hawaii, B Company, WTB Fort Campbell, Ky., and I am not sure what unit the last Soldier was from. We could have seen more, but as usual, some were not in their rooms and some were having additional surgery and/or doing Rehab.

All of the wounded we saw were all injured during some type of IED explosion. Two of the five we saw lost both legs and one had lost one leg. The others all had severe injuries to their legs and would have month of additional surgeries and Rehab to get back on track. One of the Marines we visited with met, has a brother assigned to the Marine Liaison section who is a former member of Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 25th Marine of Garden City, NY. This is the location of the Battalion Headquarters of Golf Company that is at Picatinny Arsenal in Dover, NJ. a local Marine Corps Reserve unit we have supported and worked with for many years. This Marine was back in the hospital for some additional surgery and we talked for quite some time. We gave him all the items that we give out and he thanked us for taking the time to stop by. A good visit with this Marine and we all shook hands and said Semper Fi as we moved to visit another room.

One of the wounded we visited was on a foot patrol with his unit and they had entered a local compound/village and he was the last one in. They searched around, talked to some of the locals and were headed back out of the compound. Again, he was last in line and Boom an IED exploded and he was injured badly. He was not sure if he had stepped on a pressure device or if the IED was "Command Detonated". No matter how many times we make a visit or how many stories we hear from the individuals about what happened to them, I wish I was in their shoes at times. They are all good, young men and women who have a future that will be a little tougher for them to handle but with all of what we do together it will make it a little easier for them to do.

We had a few visits with the Soldiers and as we left each one and said Semper Fi and OOH RAH, they would come back with their saying, HOOAH. We talked about what the other services used, but I don't think any of us knew or could say it right. One Soldier we visited was going home and we were keeping him from leaving, so we just exchanged a few good handshakes and wished him well. He wanted out of there FAST and it was good to see someone leaving the hospital.

We wanted to stop by and talk to PFC Derek McConnell and his family from Parsippany, NJ, but he is now at building 62 which is a facility that will allow him the freedom to go back and forth to the hospital on an outpatient type status. Hopefully, he will be able to return home to NJ in the near future.

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 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.

We passed out one watch with the Marine Corps emblem on the face. We also gave out 16, \$50 gift cards for a total of \$800. We gave two Marine and two Army blankets to the wounded we visited. We also gave out the prints from Detachment member Tom Miller. One of the Soldiers we visited with like it so much, we gave him a larger and different print. Good Job to Tom Miller. 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.

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

Our Detachment address:
L/Cpl Robert J Slattery Detachment, # 206
PO Box 566
W. Caldwell NJ 07007-0566

"Patriotism should be an integral part of our feelings at all times, for it is merely another name for those qualities of soul which make a man in peace or in war, by day or night, think of his duty to his fellows, and of his duty to the nation through which their and his loftiest aspirations must find their fitting expression"

Theodore Roosevelt
1916

Semper Fidelis,
Eddie Neas
SgtMaj/ USMCR/RET
Alpha 1/1, Viet Nam
HUEVET68@aol.com