



Walter Reed National Military Medical Center Trip Report for 15 May 2012

Six members of the Slattery Detachment made this month's visit. Detachment members were Marc Purcelli, Eddie Neas, Chris Holleran, Steve Bliss, Bob Stalzer & Father Mike Hanly. We left an hour earlier so we could make a visit to the MATC location (Military Advanced Training Center) and visit with some of the wounded.

We arrived at the MATC building and waited for Don Paterson to meet us in the lobby. While we were there, we talked with some talk former military who were in the hospital for a number of reasons. We all had some sort of Marine Corps attire on, so we did stand out just a little.....OOH RAH, you could see they were quite pleased with what we do. We passed out a few Detachment coins and one or two of the Dress Blue bears that we bring. A good way to start off the visit in the hospital.

The MATC is a place where the wounded that have lost an arm or leg and sometimes both, can rehab their limbs and get used to wearing their new prosthetics. When we first walked in, a Marine who had lost both legs and was in a wheel chair looked at us and said, "Hey, the Jersey Marines are here". We have seen him the past few visits. He wheeled himself over to us and we started a 15-20 minute conversation. This Marine has a very positive outlook in what the future holds for him. He told us he does his Rehab in the morning and then hangs around to help out the others for a few hours. A Very Motivated Marine...As we were talking to this Marine, another Marine who had lost both legs was walking around the track with an big chain tied around his waist with about 5' of chain on the floor and a weigh plate attached to the end of the chain. He was pulling it around trying to strengthen up his body. It did not look comfortable, but he just kept walking around like it was nothing. To me, as we stand there watching some of this, I almost feel embarrassed that you have all of my limbs and can walk without any problems. None of the wounded we have ever visited within my six years of these visits has ever looked for any sympathy. Absolutely amazing are the men and women who wear the uniform of our Military.

We broke into two groups and walked around and talked to some of the men who were doing their Rehab or had just finished. One visit we made was a Navy EOD tech that was injured in a motorcycle accident after returning home from Afghanistan. He was on active duty years ago, went into the reserves and became a full time fireman in his home town. After 911, he joined the Reserves and was back and fort on active duty for a few years. He said he got tired of leaving the military and Fire Department, so he gave up his full time job with the Fire Department and re-enlisted back on active duty.

He came home after his tour in Afghanistan and was injured and lost one of his legs below the knee. He was as focused as the rest of the wounded we see and was looking forward to getting his prosthetic leg and going back to his unit. We told him who we were and we gave him his service Afghan blanket, Detachment coin and gift card. He thanked us and we were on our way to visit with someone else.

We stopped a Marine nearby who was finishing up with his Rehab. Sitting next to him was his wife and we introduce ourselves and told them who we are and why we were here. He was with 1st Battalion, 6th Marines out of Camp Lejeune, NC. He was wounded during an IED explosion and you could see in his eyes his Rehab was, lets just say Tough. We have seen many of the wounded over the years and you can see in their eyes and hear it in their voices that they're pissed that they are going through this and wish they were somewhere else. One of the things we all try to do during our visits is take their mind off the pain and discomfort they are experiencing and hopefully try to have them forget even for a few minutes or even seconds where they are. I am not sure that it works, but at least we try. We gave him and his wife a Marine Corps Afghan blanket, Detachment coin and all of the other stuff we bring down. We gave them a few gift cards and told them both to enjoy a dinner on the Slattery Detachment members and family and all of the supporting organizations we partner with. The last thing we gave them was the application from the Family & Friends for Freedom Fund. They thanked and we said Semper Fi and left to head over to the main building to get some chow before the visit with the wounded on the floors.

As we head over to the main building to grab some chow, you could see in all of our eyes and the way we talked, it was a good visit. It's good to see the wounded working at their individual rehab and looking to recover as fast as possible. More than half of the wounded we see look to stay in the military and some say, "this is it for me" and will look to leave the military when they get the chance.

So it was a great way to start off the visit on that day. We all agreed that we should visit the MATC location on all future visits, so to me, it's a done deal. 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.

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.

There were approximately 35 wounded with various battle injuries in the hospital and that includes members from all of the military services. A lot of them are in the CCU and we did not get to visit with them. We were able to visit with two Navy; one was a corpsman with 2nd Battalion, 6th Marines not sure what unit the other Sailor was with. We also saw three Marines and three Soldiers during this visit. The three Marines we saw were from the following units, 2nd Battalion, 6th Marines at Camp Lejeune, NC and 3rd MLG MP Company stationed in Okinawa Japan. The three Soldiers we saw were from the 8th TSC 706th Ordnance Company and one from Delta Company, 508th Parachute Infantry and one from Delta Company of the 504th both of the famed 82nd Airborne Division.

Most of the wounded we saw were all injured during some type of IED explosion. We saw one Soldier who unfortunately was shot by an Afghan National Army Soldier who was supposed to be one of the good guys. I asked him what happen to the guy who shot him and he just looked at us and said, "I Killed him". They all had severe injuries to their legs and have weeks or months of additional surgeries and Rehab to get back on track. As we were getting ready to leave, a man came over to us and introduced himself and gave me six gift cards to hand out. I asked him who he was, and he said, "I am a First Sergeant stationed at Andrews Air Force Base". He was making a visit to see someone and had a few gift cards (\$225) left over. He saw what we were doing and figured we could use them to give out on the next visit. We said thank you, gave him a Detachment coin and a few cigars for his buddies who smoke in his unit. We all shook hands and said, Semper Fi.

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 passed out 31 \$50 gift cards for a total of \$1,550. We gave two Marine, three Army and one Navy Afghan blankets to the wounded we visited. We also gave out the prints from Detachment member Tom Miller. Good Job to Tom Miller. We finally had the Dress Blue Bears and we came home with none of them. The kids, Moms, wives and girlfriends of the wounded all enjoy them. We also gave out cigars that my friend Trevor donated to our Detachment and for those of them that smoked they got a good cigar. 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*

**"Far better is it to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs,
even though checkered by failure, than to take the rank with those
poor spirits who neither enjoy much or suffer much, because they
live in the gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat"**

**Theodore Roosevelt
Speech at Hamilton Club, Chicago, 10 April 1899**

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