



## Bethesda & Walter Reed Hospital Trip Report

Five members of the Slattery Detachment and one guest made this month's trip. Detachment members were Marc Purcelli, Eddie Neas, Chris Holleran, Steve Bliss and Bob Stalzer. We also had the second member of Blackrock join us on this month's visit. Last month it was Dan Parker and this month we had Shore Stokes, a VMI graduate.

I drove down to Walter Reed on Monday so I could present a check from our Detachment to a Marine who was severely wounded in Afghanistan last year. Cpl Todd Nicely is just one of three quadruple amputees to survive the wars in Afghanistan or Iraq. He not only lived to tell the tale, he learned to walk again. Cpl Nicely and his wife appreciated the check from all of us and it was an honor to meet this Marine. We talked for a few minutes and I watched him walk around the room, like nothing was wrong with him. I went to shake his hand not realizing it was a prosthetic one, he lifted it and we shook hands like all was OK. I wish I could have added a few extra zeros on the check I gave him, but it was not because I was feeling sorry for him, I just wanted to help out and make things just a little bit easier for him.

After Cpl Nicely left, I walked around with Don Patterson and we talked to a few of the other wounded who were going through their rehab. I wish I had a check book with me. I talked to a Marine Cpl who had lost both legs. He was there with his wife and two young daughters. I reached into my pocket and pulled out two \$25 American Express gift cards and told him to go have some dinner on us. I looked at his two young girls and reached back into my pocket and gave him the last two AMEX gift cards I had and told him to buy something nice for his daughters. I also ran into a Marine SgtMaj who we met last year at Bethesda who had lost both legs. I was glad I was able to stop by and say hello and see how he was doing. The MATC rehab room was packed with wounded men. I could had given away all the stuff I had in my car if I brought it upstairs, but that was for tomorrow's visit to Bethesda. I could have been Santa Claus that day and after I left Walter Reed, I wish I was.

The next morning I drove over to Bethesda so I could meet, Bob, Steve, Mark, Chris and Shore at the Marine Liaison section. They arrived around 12 noon and we all headed down to the galley (Navy for Cafeteria) for a quick bite to eat before we started our visit.

As I was sitting in the Liaison section, I could not help but over hear a lady on her cell phone talking to someone about her credit card. She was telling the person on the other end that she could not have used her card to buy gas, "I don't own a car". After she got off the phone, I introduced myself and asked her what happened and was there

someone she knew in the hospital. She said yes. Her husband, a Marine, was in the CCU. She then told me that someone had gotten hold of the credit card information back home in Michigan and used her card and almost cleaned out her account. I could not believe this. Here she was in the hospital with her husband in the CCU and now she had someone stealing her credit card information and making purchases. It isn't bad enough that her husband was wounded in Afghanistan, but here in the US of A, someone is taking her money. I went over to my bag and got out \$150 in gift cards and told her they were from our Detachment in New Jersey and hopefully it would help her out until this all got squared away. She had tears in her eyes and could not have thanked me enough. I told Nancy Nasse the Recovery Care Coordinator at Bethesda that when I got back to New Jersey I would see if we could do a little more. It's unbelievable, how much is one family supposed to deal with? More on this later.

We checked into the Marine Corps Liaison Section and grabbed our stuff and headed up to the floor to start our visit. We were told that there were approximately 25 in the hospital, 23 Marines, two Soldiers and two Navy. Some were still in CCU and as usual there are a few getting additional surgeries or doing their rehab in other parts of the Hospital. We were able to visit eleven of the wounded on the floor, nine Marines and two Soldiers.

The Marines we saw were from the following units, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 10<sup>th</sup> Marines, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Marines, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Marines, 3<sup>rd</sup> LAR Battalion. These units are from Camp Lejeune, NC, Camp Pendleton and 29 Palms, Calif. We also visited two Soldiers from the following units, 744<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company, 321 Engineer Battalion in Utah and an Army Ranger from 1/75 Ranger Regiment based at Fort Stewart. Keep them and all who serve in your prayers the next few months. We wish the best and a speedy recovery to all we did not get to see.

The first Marine I wanted to see was a friend of a member of Operation Jersey Cares whose son was with him in Afghanistan with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 10<sup>th</sup> Marines. This Marine was in the CCU when he first arrived at Bethesda. We walked over to his room to his mother and introduced ourselves and asked if we could see him. He was falling in and out of sleep so we talked to his mother and gave her the Marine Corps blanket, gift cards, letters/get well cards from local elementary schools, Detachment coin, brochure and the application from the Family and Friends for Freedom Fund. She thanked us and we left to visit another room.

The next Marine we visited was from 1<sup>st</sup> Combat Engineer Battalion based at Camp Pendleton. There were also five other members of his unit in the hospital. They have taken a number of casualties from IED explosions the past month or so. This Marine was on a mounted patrol and was in the fourth vehicle from the front. Three vehicles had passed over the location where the IED was buried and unfortunately for him, the IED exploded as his vehicle reached that spot. We introduced ourselves and gave him all of the stuff we give out and they appreciated that we took the time to stop by and say hello. These are amazing stories, or as I have said before, we get to listen about history from the men and women who are making it happen. A great way to spend a day.

The last person we visited was an Army Ranger from Fort Stewart in Georgia. He had been severely wounded in 2009 and was back in the hospital for additional surgeries. His mother was with him and told us what had happened to him. She said he has been a Ranger for over ten years and his Ranger attitude is always "Never Quit". We gave her an Army blanket and all of the other items we bring down and she appreciated all of it. The last thing I gave the Ranger was our Detachment coin. As I gave him the coin and the little talk I always give to each person I coin, he slowly lifted his hand and said thank you. Here he was sitting in a wheelchair and he is thanking me. To say, I got a little choked up, I would be lying. We are the ones who should be thanking each and everyone we get to visit for what they have done and what they will be going through in the coming months as they recover from their wounds. What a visit this month.....

We left the floor and headed back down to the Marine Liaison section and looked to make a quick PX call before we headed for the train. While we were in the uniform shop, a Marine in a wheel chair who is a double leg amputee was shopping with his wife who was pushing a baby stroller. We stopped by to say hello and introduced our selves. All we had with us was a Detachment coin, so we coined him. He thanked us. I looked in the stroller and asked his wife how old was the baby, she said "Nine Days". I got a little choked up and said to myself, I wish we could have given them more than just our coin. But, here they were walking around the uniform shop like they were back home shopping for groceries. Man, what we could do for these young men and women and their families if we hit the lottery. BTW, we always put in five bucks each and get tickets for the largest jackpot for Mega Ball or Power Ball tickets before we head back on the train to New Jersey. It's like they say, "A Dollar and a Dream". We have not hit anything big, YET, but if when we do, we all will have a check book in our pockets when we visit.

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.

We passed out three watches, 19 \$50 gift cards and six Marine Corps blankets and two Army blankets. We also gave out the Slattery Detachment coin and brochure, get well cards/letters from local elementary schools here in NJ and of course the prints from Tom Miller. Sorry, but we did not have any bears in dress blues for this visit. They are always a big hit and hopefully we will have them for our next visit. OK, I'll do 20 pushups for not bringing them, OK I'll make it 21, One more for the Corps, OOH RAH.....

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.

The last thing I did on Tuesday night was meet and have dinner with LtCol Bradley and his wife Kim. He is the Commanding Officer of 2<sup>nd</sup> Combat Logistics Battalion and his wife Kim is with the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society. We have known and worked with Kim the past few years while she was at Bethesda and Walter Reed. They are relocating to Camp Lejeune, NC and 2<sup>nd</sup> CLB will deploy later this year with the 24 MEU. As most of you may know a tornado passed through a housing area at Camp Lejeune last month and destroyed many of the homes. One Marine and his wife lost everything they had. Our Detachment and Operation Jersey Cares heard about this and we decided to act. I presented a check for \$2,500 to the LtCol from the Slattery Detachment to give to the Marine who lost everything. I also gave the LtCol a \$1,000 check from the Slattery Detachment to be given to the USO at Camp Lejeune to help out some of the families recovering from the storm.

I also gave them \$1,100 in Wal-Mart gift cards that I picked up on Sunday that was donated by Operation Jersey Cares. These gift cards will be distributed by the Navy-Marine-Corps Relief Society at Camp Lejeune. They will also be used to help out some of the families who need help recovering from the storm.

So 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. 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.

The Wednesday after the trip we had our monthly Detachment meeting and I told all who were in attendance about this visit. I mentioned the issue with the Marine in the CCU whose wife had problems with their credit cards. Without skipping a beat, a member of the detachment said, "What can we do for this Marine?" The Detachment then recommended that we send them a check to help them out while they fight through the BS or getting their new credit cards or funds put back into the account. That's what we do at this Detachment. We help out someone who is wearing one of the uniforms of our military services and fighting in other countries for their freedom and protecting ours at the same time. We may not always agree on what to do or how we should help, but one thing is for sure. WE WILL AND DO HELP OUT. Talk is cheap, but like Michael Jordan and the Nike commercials state, "JUST DO IT". Well, We Do. Ooh Rah and Semper Fi.

Most people will be celebrating Memorial Day at the end of this month by enjoying a three day weekend and eating hamburgers, hotdogs and having a few cold ones. For me and the rest of the Slattery detachment, we will be thinking about the men and women we have seen over the years and hoping they are finally getting to enjoy that day. I will also remember friends like, Larry Anderson who I grew up with in Brooklyn, NY in the 1950's who was killed in Viet Nam. I will remember two members of my platoon in Boot Camp who were killed in Viet Nam, Robert Slattery (our Detachment is named after him) and Joseph Brubaker.

I will also remember the Marines and Corpsman who were members of my platoon in Viet Nam who did not come home. That's what Memorial Day means to me. I don't forget them.

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](http://WWW.Marinescare.org)

**"The nation which forgets its defenders will itself be forgotten"**

**Calvin Coolidge**

27 July 1920

*Semper Fidelis,*

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