



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

Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland Trip Report for 25, 26 July 2013

This report covers our Detachment's first visit to Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland to meet with the wounded and injured military Service personnel arriving from Germany. On this visit was Kevin Meara, Marc Purcelli, Linda Neas and myself.

This visit we all drove and we met at the rest stop, welcome center in Delaware on Route 95 around 1130. We took two cars and made it to Andrews Air Force Base about 3:00PM. This was our first visit to Andrews and I was not sure what to expect. I was not sure how much of a welcome we would get from the hospital staff, the wounded and their families if they were there, and any other personnel we would run into. Well, there was not one issue and everyone and I do mean EVERYONE welcomed us with open arms, handshakes and even a few hugs. We were not sure if the plane would arrive at the designated time and if it was late, who knows what time it could arrive. We all got hotel rooms on the base and would look to head home on Saturday. Luckily the plane arrived on time so we did not have to deal with standing around looking for something to do. We met up with our Marine Liaison contact at the hospital and he gave us a tour of the facility. As a matter of fact, the Gunny was from Toms River, NJ so as far as I was concerned we were going to be fine.

All of the patients were transported from the flight line in ambulances or buses depending on their injuries or wounds. Once they got to the hospital, the Doctors, Nurses and other hospital staff would triage each and every one of them to make sure all of them were ok after the long plane ride. They then were taken to their rooms, some had two beds and others had had four beds. After they settled in, they had dinner. The local Red Cross had volunteers serving and helping out, and from what I was told, the food was pretty good. The two Red Cross volunteers we met were a little skeptical at first, but when they saw how we acted and what we were doing, we were welcomed by them also. They thanked us for what we were doing and said we need to come back. From what we all saw and how we all felt after this visit, we definitely will.

Around 6:30 or 7:00pm we started to make our way into the rooms and/or the large community sitting room and started to talk with the wounded. During this visit we were able to visit with nine Soldiers, two Marines and two Sailors. One was a Navy Sea Bee. Some were wounded in Combat, others had medical issues that required them to be flown back to the US of A for additional rehab or tests. There were also some who were injured performing their jobs. We also met with a female Army Soldier who had returned

stateside because she has cancer. Stuff like that bothers me! During the seven years I have been making these visits I have seen too many with issues like her. I can understand seeing the wounded, but when they have to come home or are lying in the bed at Walter Reed because of some sort of medical problem, it definitely seems, Not Fair.

Not everyone who serves in combat is wounded and unfortunately there are those who get injured doing their day to day job just like in the civilian. We at the Slattery Detachment visit with everyone who in is in the hospital no matter how they got there. The two Sailors we visited first received a Navy Afghan blanket, Detachment coins and a few \$50 gift cards. They both thanked us and we all shook hands and wished them well. Then we got to visit with the two Marines, one was wounded in Combat with 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 2<sup>nd</sup> Marines based at Camp Lejeune, NC. He was shot in the knee and would require some additional surgery. He said, he would be fine. He was looking to get back with his Platoon after all was said and done. The other Marine also had a leg injury and was back in the states to get some more specialized type of medical care. We gave both of them the Marine Corps Afghan blankets, Detachment coin, gift cards and of course a Marine Corps watch. More on this item later. We wished both of them well, said Semper Fi and told them we would see them in the morning before they took off on a flight to another part of the country. If most of you have read my previous reports, Walter Reed has not been getting all of the wounded or injured service members from Iraq or Afghanistan. As we would find out, depending on their type of injury, they would be shipped to a hospital location nearer their home or military base for treatment. All of the service members we saw all came to Andrews on the same plane. On Saturday morning, there had to be 6-10 different flights to various parts of the country. Some left early Saturday morning, but all of them would be gone by noon time.

We headed over to one of the rooms that had three Soldiers. One of the Soldiers had his family with him. All three had been wounded in combat. We introduced ourselves and told them who we were and why we were here. They all seemed happy that we came to visit with them. The father of one of the wounded Soldiers was a member of the National Guard/Army Reserve. After we gave the Soldiers an Army Afghan blanket, Detachment coin and a few gift cards, I gave the Dad a Detachment coin. He started to give it back and said something to the effect that he didn't deserve it. I told him that HE was a member of the US military and that his son was lying in bed recovering from being wounded in combat. I told him that he more than earned this coin. We shook hands tightly and we all felt better. We also gave his mother and girlfriend a bear in Marine Dress Blues. They all smiled and so did we. We wished all in the room well and left to visit another room.

The next room we went into had three Soldiers and one of the Marines we saw earlier. We introduced ourselves and starting talking with all of them. I was out of Army blankets and told them we would get them the blankets in the morning before they took off on their flight home. Don Paterson would meet us on Saturday morning and bring with him any items we ran out of. Sometimes when making these visits, we may feel like

we are intruding on their space or time, but after a few minutes of who, what and where, conversations take off. Two of the Soldiers in the room were from Brooklyn, NY and this is where Linda and I jumped in. One Soldier was from Crown Heights. I worked for NY Telephone Company for nine years in that part of Brooklyn. We went back and forth about this street and that building. The other Soldier was born in a hospital that Linda worked at as an RN. So we all became close friends after finding out this and that. It was a good visit. We then left the hospital and looked to return on Saturday morning at 0800 to see them take off for home or another hospital.

After checking out of the hotel and loading up the car, five Air Force personnel came out of the lobby wearing flight suits. One M/Sgt came over and said hello and we shook hands. I asked him if I could get a ride on their aircraft. He said, "Where did you want to go?" I said, "I didn't care as long as I went". We all laughed. As they got in their vehicle, I went to my car and got five Detachment coins and gave each one of them a coin. I thanked them for what they do and said wait, one more minute. I went back to the car and got the last Air Force Blanket I had and told them I am not sure who to give this to. Whether rank had its privileges or they pulled numbers out a hat, but they had to decide. Again we all laughed and wished them well. The visit was getting better and better as the hours passed.

The next morning after meeting with Don and getting the blankets, we found the three Soldiers in their rooms and gave each of them an Army blanket. We then got hit with this question. The three Soldiers wanted to know if we had any of the Marine Corps watches like the one we gave to the Marine. I said, "YES we do". So I walked out to my car and got three of them. I walked back into the room and I said, "I know you will be the first ones in your unit to have a Marine watch". We all laughed. We also gave each one of them a service flag that I told them they could hang in their "I Love Me Room" when they get to where they were going. It was a great visit and we all tried to make their welcome back to the good old US of A, a little more special. I know we did.

The Gunny asked us if we could visit with two Soldiers on the other side of the room who were in the same Squad and both wounded in Afghanistan. We gladly said yes. These two Soldiers had been wounded a few days earlier and the Squad Leader told us he lost three men and five of them were wounded. I remember hearing about this on TV a few days ago. We talked about who we were and why we do this and gave them all the items that we always give out. The Squad Leader gave a detailed description on the day they got hit. After giving the one Soldier a Detachment coin, he told us that his father was a Marine, so we got another coin and told him to give this to his Father. We all shook hands, wished them well and said, "Semper Fi" and left the room.

There were a few Soldiers from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division and one from the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne. All Proud Army units. It was a great visit with these Soldiers and we; as Marines were honored to spend time with them.

Linda said to me. "All I can say as an RN, was that I was impressed with the professionalism and dedication of the staff. Everyone Officers to the Enlisted made me

feel welcome. The Red Cross Volunteers were attentive to say the least and their dedication showed. The speed and accuracy with which the staff performed their duties was impressive. I am happy I was included and I look forward to going again”.

Marc added that “everyone there made our visit feel like we have been there since day one. A great trip, great group of people and can’t wait for the next visit. Was not sure how the troops were going to except us after a long flight. Should have figured no matter how banged up or tired they were, you can’t dampen their spirits. This made our visit easy and fun”.

Now a little about all the people we met and who worked at the hospital. We talked with three Colonels, and one Major who was the Flight Surgeon. We talked with the Nurses and Medics who took care of them while they were at Andrews. As a matter of fact, one of the Nurses was a former Marine who left the Corps and went to school to become a Nurse. OOH RAH! Everyone appreciated what we did for the men and women at the hospital. We also ran into a Captain, who was one of the flight crew we met as we were checking out of the hotel. We gave her the last bear in Dress Blues. She told us she would put it on her gear and take it with her every place she would fly. Two days later I received an email with a message thanking us for what we do and the picture of her new “Flight Buddy” the Bear on her pack. (Picture is at the end of the report) What an incredible trip this was. Everyone we met during the two days was sincere and truly interested in what we are doing and thanked us for doing so. This had to be one of the best visits we had in a long time. We will look forward to making future visits to Andrews AFB as this turned out to be a great visit.

Most of you know, even though we are a Marine Corps League organization, we take the opportunity to visit every wounded service member past or present who is in the hospital no matter what uniform they wear. We are all on the same side and we all need to support the families and each and every wounded service member in the hospital while they recover from their wounds.

We passed out 30 \$50 TD Bank gift cards (\$1,500.00) and one \$50 AMEX card for a total of \$1,600.00 during this visit. One of the things we found out, that they need at the hospital were Calling Cards. At Walter Reed Hospital, most have cell phones and calling cards are not needed. At Andrews AFB, each bed has a Land line and none of them have their cell phones, so they have to call home collect. So calling cards are a welcome item for them to have at the hospital. I told the Gunny, I would spread the word and make something happen. When I got home I found 16 calling cards left over from previous hospital visits and mailed them to him on Monday. Hopefully we can mail out a ton more and make it easier for them all to call home after getting off the plane.

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.

To all of you who have donated money and/or purchased items from our Detachment, we thank you for what you do.

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. 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. 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)

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***"Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him".***

***Aldous Huxley***  
*March 1956*

*Semper Fidelis,*

**Eddie Neas**  
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