



Walter Reed National Military Medical Center Trip Report for 28 August 2012

Four members of the Slattery Detachment made this month's visit. Detachment members were Marc Purcelli, Eddie Neas, Keith Butler and Chris Holleran. We also had a guest who was making his first visit. His name is Kevin Meara, Marc and I met him last week at the open house for Thomas Jerome House in Hamilton Square. He started and an organization called City of Angels. City of Angels was founded in January 2009, is a community based non-profit organization that assists families in navigating the substance abuse treatment system, and also offers wrap-around services for the individuals after they have completed treatment. Kevin Meara, is also a Hamilton Township councilman. We, at the Slattery Detachment welcome him. We left from Newark Penn Station on the 0620 train and headed down to Union Station in Washington, DC.

This trip we planned on making visits to see the wounded and their families both in the main building and also at the MATC clinic building so we needed to leave an hour earlier than usual. The MATC Clinic is a full service, state of the art, rehabilitation facility to care for the wounded. What goes on at the location is absolutely amazing. You have to be there to believe it. More on this visit later.

We arrived at the Marine Liaison Section around 1045 and coordinated with them as they were providing us with an escort. We broke up into two groups, Kevin, Chris and I were in one group and Marc and Keith in the other. We do this for two reasons. When making a room visit, if all five of us are in one room with the wounded and their families, it can be a little tight. The other reason is this allows us to be able to visit more of the wounded on the floor and that is a good thing. To be honest, we could have 8-10 of us making a visit and we may not see everyone. I hate to leave knowing that there is a possibility that we have missed someone. Plus we are only allotted one hour on the floor, so we need to hustle and make sure we visit as many as we can. No goofing off allowed on this day.

The hospital was quite busy and there have been a lot of inbound wounded the past few weeks. 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 the families and each and every wounded service member in the hospital while they recover from their wounds.

There were over 40 wounded with various battle injuries in the hospital and that includes members from all of the military services. Some of them are in the CCU and we did not get to visit with them. We were able to visit with two Marines and six Soldiers from various units. We also were able to visit with a State Department employee who was wounded. More on him later.

The Marines we saw were from Bravo Company, 2nd Tanks at Camp Lejeune, NC and 1st Battalion, 1st Marines based at Camp Pendleton, Ca. The Soldiers we saw were from the following units, 503 Infantry, 173rd Airborne based in Italy. 307th BSB, 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg, NC. 164th 2nd BGD, Fort Stewart. Command Group, 4th BCT, Fort Carson, Co. 508th C Company, Fort Bragg, NC. 14-33 Sapper ENG Company, Calumet, Mi. and 2nd BCT 101st Airborne, Fort Campbell, KY. So as you can see, there were many different units from all over the country. You have to imagine how difficult it may be for some families as they travel all the way to Bethesda, Md to be at bedside with their loved ones. The applications we pass out from the Family & Friends for Freedom Fund organization has helped out many of these families over the years.

As we were leaving the Marine Liaison office I ran into a lady who was walking in and I said hello. I asked her if she had someone in the hospital and she said, "Yes, my husband." I asked her for her name and what room her husband was in. She told me that he was not in the room at the moment. I asked her if she had a few moments so we could all speak to her. She said yes and I proceeded to give her the, who what and where of why we were there. She was taken back for a minute and then I gave her the blanket, Detachment coin and a few gift cards and other items. She thanked us and I told her we would stop by and visit with her and her husband if he came back to his room. So we had not even gotten on the elevator and we already started our visit.

Most of the wounded we saw were all injured during some type of IED explosion. As we have seen over the years during our visits, some of them had severe leg & arm injuries and/or amputations, but most of them seem to be in good spirits. I really believe this is due to the exceptional care and they get from the Doctors, Nurses, Corpsman and all of the other hospital staff that takes care of them. Also, having their families by their bedside has to play a big part in helping them heal and recover from their wounds.

The first Marine we saw was a Marine from Marc & my former Battalion in Viet Nam, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines. Keith, Kevin & I introduced ourselves just as he was leaving the room to go do some Rehab. I stopped him for a minute and told him who we were and why we were here. I also told him about being a former member of 1/1. He was with Bravo Company and I was with Alpha Company. We shook hands and said Semper Fi and off he went. We said hello to his father who was a former member of 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines during Desert Storm in 1991. I gave him a Detachment coin and gave him an Ooh Rah and Semper Fi. I wish we could have talked with him a little more, but we did not want to prevent him from going to rehab.

The next person we saw was a Soldier who has a brother in the Marines, so we had no problem getting into his room, LOL. He had some severe shrapnel wounds from

head to toe from an IED explosion. Both of his arms were heavily bandaged. We talked for a while and he was in his room by himself. His family was out getting a bite to eat so we missed talking with them. We gave him all the stuff we give out and he really liked the Army blanket. I asked him about his injury and he told us what happened. He then told us that his brother, who is in the Marines, was also wounded and had injuries to his arms also. He then told us, that their younger brother was going to enlist in the Marines and told his brothers, "I guess after I go over I'll be getting some wounds to my arms also." I thought for minute that he was fooling, but he wasn't. I asked him if his brother was still going to join the Marines after hearing about him getting wounded like his brother and without a bit of hesitation, He firmly said, "Yes." What a family, I could only imagine what the mother and father are thinking. I know we all felt honored to be in his room. What an amazing family. I wish we could have met the mother and father. We shook hands and we said Semper Fi and left to visit another room.

We walked into a room where an Army Colonel from the 101st Airborne Division was supposed to be. He was having some additional surgery and only his young son and daughter were there. We said hello dropped off all of the stuff we had, and told them to say hello to his father and that a few Marines had stopped by to say hello.

As I was looking over the list and walking down the hallway, looking for a room that had someone in it, I noticed that one of the wounded on the floor was a State Department employee. But he was not in his room. As we walked over to where Don was with all of the stuff we met a gentleman in a suit and tie. He introduced himself and so did we. He told us he was visiting one of his State Department employees who had been wounded. I asked for his name and told him we just left his room, but he was not there. He said, "He is now". I asked if we could stop by and say hello. He told us, that he would like that. So we walked over knocked on his door and asked him if we could come in. He said something to the effect of "Hell Yea." So we walked in and met him and his mother. We stayed with him for about 15 minutes and talked about what he was doing there and how long he had been in country. He was supposed to be in Afghanistan for two years, but was wounded about 60 days into his tour. He had already served a tour in Iraq and this was his first in Afghanistan. He was in an explosion that was set off when a suicide bomber was wearing a vest loaded with explosives. Unfortunately, his close friend was killed. This incident killed four and wounded ten Americans. The suicide bomber was a child and there were two of them. He thanked us for stopping by and asked if he could make a donation to our organization. I told him that was not the reason we came by to see him. He said, "I know, but it's the least I could do." I gave him the Detachment brochure and told him to look us up. We gave him an Army blanket because he was attached to an Army unit and all of the other stuff we give out. We shook hands and he said a Big Thank You.....A good visit with him.

Before we left the floor, we ran into one of the Occupational Therapists that we see on every visit. She told us to stop by and say hello to the rest of the other Therapists at their new location. We walked in and there were about 15-20 and some of them were eating lunch. We were introduced as the Marines from NJ and everyone said hello, stopped what they were doing and we all introduced ourselves.

Then the Jersey girl jokes started. We met one new Therapist who was from NJ and she got the customary "Hoop earrings" from us. We all laughed and said we would be back in September on a visit and that all of them need to wear their Hoop Earrings, Spoof up their hair and we would have a "Jersey Thursday Day" during our next visit. We had a good time. We have built a great relationship with them over the years.

We headed down to grab a bite to eat before we headed to the MATC Clinic. While eating, a Navy LCmdr stopped by and asked us if we stopped in a said hello to the State Department employee. I said, "Yes we did." He said, "Great and thank you; and walked away. We do a lot of good on our visits and it's nice to have someone stop by and tell us Thank you. We don't need it, but it's nice to hear.....

The MATC clinic was very busy and we all split up and talked for a few minutes to as many as we could. We did not want to talk to them for any length of time as this could have prevented them from doing their Rehab. We passed out the remaining gift cards we had. We could have given out another 10-15, \$50 gift cards. We only had nine left when we walked in. We need to take more on our next visit. I came back empty handed. All of the stuff I brought was passed out to the wounded and their families.

We talked to two Marines who both had one or two leg amputations. We asked them what they planned on doing after finishing Rehab and any additional surgeries they may have. One of them told us, "I plan on staying in the Corps" and the other one said, "I am getting out and going to school". On the front of one of the Marines Tee shirt was the words "COMBAT WOUNDED MARINE, SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED." On the back of his shirt was a big picture of an explosion with the following words, "I HAD A BLAST IN AFGHANISTAN." You can't make this stuff up, and you have to be there to see the spirit these young men have after suffering some severe wounds while serving our country. This is how some of them deal with what has happened to them and it's an honor to be able to visit with them.

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 the last watch we had with the Marine Corps emblem on the face. We also passed out 29 \$50 gift cards for a total of \$1,450. I need 10-15 more and will ask the Detachment for additional gift cards. We gave two Marine and six Army afghan blankets to the wounded we visited. We also gave out the prints from Detachment member Tom Miller. Good Job to Tom Miller. We also gave away all the Dress Blue Bears we had. They are a big hit with the Moms, wives and kids we visit.

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. I always give out the application last and talk about what this organization is all about. The look on the faces of the family members is amazing at times. It's like they cannot believe someone they don't even know and who is from a different military service is doing

this for them. A big OOH RAH to Bob and Kathy and all those associated with their organization.

I really wish we could be doing more. So for everyone out there who is reading this report for the first time and you are looking to help out, please do so. The wounded and their families will greatly appreciate it.

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

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"A soldier can have no greater professional asset than a high sense of duty. This applies with equal force to menial administrative tasks as well to major military responsibilities"

**Major General Aubrey "Red" Newman
Follow Me, 1981**

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