



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

Wounded Warrior Battalion East at Camp Lejeune, NC Trip Report for 23-25 September 2014

This report covers our Detachment's visit last week to the Wounded Warrior Battalion East at Camp Lejeune, NC. There were five Detachment members making this trip; Detachment Commandant, Keith Butler, Kevin Meara, John Andrews, Don Patterson and Eddie Neas. This was our first visit to this location and to say we were impressed would be putting it mildly. Three of us flew down from New Jersey and two drove, Don from Maryland and Keith driving up from Georgia. We stayed on the base at the Lejeune Inn and the accommodations were great. It was right next to the main PX and in a land of Marines and Corpsman. It doesn't get any better than that. We all arrived about the same time on Tuesday afternoon and our tour would start Wednesday morning at 1100.

We arrived at the Wounded Warrior facility early and the Commanding Officer, LtCol Suttee and SgtMaj Painter were already standing outside. Also, there were Craig Stephens, the Command Advisor and Dallas Poole the unit's Charitable Organization Liaison who are both retired Marines.

The Wounded Warrior Battalion East area of responsibility includes all Marines and Sailors attached to Marine Corps units, generally east of the Mississippi River to Landstuhl, Germany. This includes San Antonio Military Medical Center and the Department of Veterans Affairs Poly-trauma unit in Minneapolis, Minn.

We also had the pleasure of meeting up with a member, Rodney McCoy of the Arthur R Meyer, Jr, Marine Corps League in Tallahassee, FL and his wife. They were at Camp Lejeune and wanted to tour the facility also. And yes, we gave him a Detachment brochure and one of our coins. I'll make sure he gets this report. We invited them to join us for dinner later that evening, but they were heading back home after the visit.

We all proceeded over to a statue of three Marines off to the left side of the main entrance. As we walked up to the statue, I thought to myself that I had seen this image before". Well, I was right. It's a statue of 1stSgt Brad Kasal who was the First Sergeant of 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines. He was being carried out of a building during the battle of Fallujah in Iraq in 2004 with his 9mm pistol in his hand and let's just say pretty badly wounded. He received seven bullet wounds and had 41 pieces of shrapnel in his body. He survived and is currently the SgtMaj for the 4th Marine Division. Off to the right of

the statue is a granite/marble stone with an inscription on it by the father of L/Cpl Chance Phelps who was KIA in Iraq on 9 April 2004. Again, that name rang a bell and if you all saw the movie a few years ago titled "Taking Chance" where the LtCol was played by Kevin Bacon you know what I am talking about. If you have not seen the movie, RENT IT.

We walked inside and the tour started in the gym which is a state of the art facility with a rock climbing wall, free weights and weight machines that are handicap accessible along with various treadmill type machines. A few Marines and Corpsman were using the gym while we were there. We walked into an office titled Transition Center and it was staffed by three to four people. They work with all of the wounded who will be leaving active duty and returning to civilian life and looking for work. A very friendly staff and some were retired Marines helping the wounded who are leaving the Corps and the Navy. We gave them a few Detachment brochures and coins and thanked them for what they are doing. There are pictures all over the place of the wounded men and women who have participated in previous Wounded Warrior events. Some at the Battalion were getting ready to head out to Colorado this week.

The next stop was the pool area. It has a three lane 25 yard swimming pool. It was large enough to allow kayaks to be used by the wounded. There was also small pool that is wheel chair accessible with an elevator type device that allow them to get in and out of the water and do certain exercises to improve their overall body strength. It helps them mentally as well. We then toured a location that helps all get a resume together so they can enter the civilian world looking for employment with a professional looking resume. We were told it may take an individual three to four visits to get it done right. No short cuts are taken trying to assist them in any way possible.

We then went outside. To the right was a large outdoor full size basketball court and I do mean LARGE. It is covered with a roof and has the capability for tennis and volleyball activities. It is a multi-purpose facility and is also used for promotion, award and change of command type ceremonies. There are two metal bleachers at each end and they were donated by various organizations. I asked them if they need any more and they said no, but would let us know. I said we could help buy one if needed. They told us they come unassembled and I said no problem, we could send down a working party from our Detachment in New Jersey. They laughed and so did we, BUT I WAS SERIOUS. Next to the court was a children's play area that was donated by USAA. This was needed because of the many types of ceremonies held here and family members of the wounded that bring their kids to the facility. We all know how it is when you bring your kids some place for a few hours and if there is nothing for them to do, it can be a challenge to entertain them. This eliminates that problem. There was also a Purple Heart memorial that was donated by the Beirut Memorial Chapter 642, Military Order of the Purple Heart.

We headed to the next building which had a large kitchen area that could cook more than the normal burgers and hotdogs type menu. It had a lounge type area which had computers and TV's so the wounded could just hang out and relax out of their rooms.

A section of this area is named for LtCol Tim Maxwell who received a TBI wound in October of 2004 while serving in Iraq. LtCol Tim Maxwell, USMC (RET), is President of SemperMax Support Fund, an organization dedicated to working with and aiding wounded warriors and consulting those in a position to make a difference. Through his recuperation, he discovered that for himself and others, recovery was enhanced by being together with other wounded warriors. Today, due to his extraordinary leadership and vision, Marines at the Wounded Warrior Barracks (Maxwell Hall, named in his honor) located on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, find improved recovery through team healing. We at our Detachment have had the pleasure of meeting him a few times. This is an example of a Marine Leading from the Front, Semper Fi. When LtCol Maxwell first started out with this program, it was in small old building at another part of the base. The Wounded Warrior Battalion Facility is brand new, state of the art, clean and staffed by Marines and civilians who care. It is also located a short distance from the base hospital. LtCol Suttee and the SgtMaj presented our detachment with a Certificate of Appreciation. Back in August we send them a check for \$5,000 to help with a Mess Night, dinner aboard the USS North Carolina. This donation was because of all the organizations, friends of the Detachment and various fund raisers we do during the year. So this Certificate "WE" received goes out to all of you who made this donation possible.

After receiving the Certificate I presented the LtCol & SgtMaj a check for \$2,500 from the Legacy of Hero Foundation. It is named in honor of a Detachment member, L/Cpl Christopher C Cosgrove III a Marine who was KIA in Iraq on 1 October 2006. He was member of Golf Company 2nd Battalion, 25th Marines a local Marine Corps Reserve unit based at Picatinny Arsenal in Dover, NJ. L/Cpl Cosgrove was with Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 25th Marines when he was KIA. I also gave them ten \$50 gift cards to be used for any of the Marines, Corpsman or family members who could use a few extra items. I did not want to take them back on the plane as they were heavy.....LOL

We then headed over to take a look at the Marines' and Corpsman lodging while at the Battalion. They are two person rooms with cable TV and internet access. They are very spacious and state of the art with all of the things you need to feel comfortable while awaiting a medical discharge or return to your unit.

When we finished our tour we asked if we could walk back through the facility and take picture and a little more time to look at everything. They said to take our time and enjoy ourselves which is what we did..... A Great Visit. We want to go back to help out in any way we can.

We saw this sign all over the place and I wanted to share it with all of you. Their mandatory lines of operation are as follows.

- MEDICAL-** Ensure delivery of world-class medical care.
- MIND-** Provide activities to improve the Marines self-worth, mental stability, sense of purpose and clarity of mind.
- BODY-** Strengthen the Marines body through physical activity and nutrition to develop life-long healthy habits

- SPIRIT- Reignite the spark within the Marine by providing a sense of belonging, purpose, pride, and a renewed sense of self-confidence.**
- FAMILY- Encourage, nurture and guide the Marines family through the recovery process and beyond.**

From what we saw during our visit, this is being done very well and I hope with what organizations like ours do and the support we get from everyone, it comes a little faster and easier.

After we left the building we headed over to see the Beirut Memorial outside the gate at Camp Johnson. We spent time looking at the names and all the memorials at this location. This memorial was built to honor the 241 Marines, Corpsman and Soldiers who were killed in the explosion of the Marine Barracks on 23 October 1983. Next to the memorial is a Viet Nam Memorial that honors all the men and women who were killed in action during the Viet Nam war. We met up with a SgtMaj and his father who is a retired SgtMaj. They told us about a new memorial that was just a few short paces away. We walked over to it and saw that it is in a rotunda type setup with glass panels encircling it with the names on each panel in alphabetical order. They are two very impressive memorials and we were all glad we stopped by and took the time to see them. We found out later that evening that they are planning to build a museum at both locations. More on this down the road.

On Wednesday evening the five of us met for dinner with LtCol Craig Stephens and his wife, SgtMaj Painter. We also had the pleasure of meeting up with SgtMaj Ray Mackey and his wife Vickki. We first met the SgtMaj and his wife during one of our monthly visits to Walter Reed Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. He was severely wounded and lost both legs to an IED explosion in Afghanistan in 2009. He was the SgtMaj for 3rd Battalion 10th Marines at the time he was wounded and the unit is based at Camp Lejeune, NC. We all had a great time and talked about the many issues facing the country and its returning veterans. And yes, we also had a few good laughs and talked about our days in the Corps.

Vickki works with Semper Fi fund and we asked her what they do. She told us the following. Every year, thousands of injured, ill and wounded service members vie for just 200 coveted slots in the annual Warrior Games, a six-day, Paralympic-style competition for the five branches of the military. Next week, the exceptional athletes who made the cut for the 2014 games will go head to head in seven different sports starting September 28 and running through October 4. Thanks to the Semper Fi Fund, their friends and family will be at the games to cheer them on. I had eight \$50 gift cards along with a few other gifts cards for places such as LL Bean, Wendy's left over from the last hospital visit back in February. So I gave them to her to give to the Marines and Corpsmen and their families who would be heading to the games the following week. She thanked us and we all smiled. Again, I got rid of some more weight, LOL...

This was an incredible visit and I hope some of the pictures you see in this newsletter and on our Detachments website will do justice to this report and what we all saw during the visit.

Visiting this facility is a great way to spend a few days. It was also great to meet the LtCol and SgtMaj and all of the staff that help the Marines and Corpsman and their

families. The wounded men and women who serve in our Armed Forces 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 on what we do and what you can do to help. WWW.Marinescare.org

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"Moreover it is more the nature of men to be less interested in things which relate to others than about those in which they themselves are concerned. The reputation of an organization becomes personal just as soon as it is an honor to belong to it".

Marshall Comte de Maurice Saxe
Mes Reveries, 1792

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