

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

Walter Reed National Military Medical Center Trip Report for 27 September 2012

Five members of the Slattery Detachment made this month's visit. Detachment members were Marc Purcelli, Eddie Neas, Tom Miller and John Andrews. We also had a guest who was making his second visit with us. Kevin Meara made the August trip and so enjoyed himself that he asked to be on the next visit and we obliged. Welcome back Kevin... John, Tom and I left from Newark Penn Station on the 0620 train and we picked up Kevin and Mark at the Trenton, NJ and then we all headed down to Union Station in Washington, DC. As always we met up with Don Patterson when we arrived at the Marine Liaison section at the main building. Don is a member of our Detachment and lives in Maryland. He visits the wounded at the hospital weekly and at times meets the wounded when they arrive at Andrews Air Force Base before they get to the hospital.

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. We have used this routine the past two visits. We all feel that we get to see more of the wounded and their families at both locations and it makes the trip that much more rewarding and enjoyable. I think this is how we are going to schedule our visit for the next few months. It adds about an hour and a half to our visit, but we all agree that it's worth it.

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, Marc and I in one group and Tom and John in the other group. 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 that this allows us to be able to visit more of the wounded on the floor and that is a good thing. At times I feel we should make a visit with a platoon size group so we could spend more time during our visits making sure we see everyone who is in the hospital, but that is not possible. It's wishful thinking on my part. 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. There is no goofing off allowed on this day.

The hospital was quite busy and there have been a lot of inbound wounded during 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 33 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, so we did not get to

visit with them. We were able to visit with two Marines and seven Soldiers from various units in the main building.

The two Marines we saw were from 1st Combat Engineer Battalion from Camp Pendleton, Ca and the second Marine was with the 2nd Marine Division at Camp Lejeune, NC. The Soldiers we saw were from the following units, 720th MP Battalion at Fort Hood, Tx, C Company, 1-2/3 Infantry Battalion, Fort Lewis, Wa, 13rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, Fort Lewis, Ks, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, NY, 789 Ordnance Company, Fort Benning, Ga. We also talked with a Soldier from the 101st Airborne Division.

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 have helped out many of these families over the years.

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 and 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 visit Keith, Marc and I made was with a Soldier from California, who welcomed us in after I asked if we could stop in and say hello. We introduced our selves as we always do and gave him and his wife all the items we pass out on all of our visits. We gave him a US Army Afghan blanket, Detachment coin, print from Tom Miller, Dress Blue Teddy bear for his wife (I told him, "I know she doesn't have one of these." We all laughed at that one) and a few \$50 gift cards. As always, the running joke with these gift cards are if you buy beer, make sure it's cold because if it is warm, the card will void out. Again we all laughed at that one too. To me humor is a big part of Leadership and we need to use it a little more often. The wounded and their families need to smile a little more and hopefully, we are able to make that happen. We also gave him a few small pillows that we get from a special lady in New Jersey, Liz Hackett. I met Liz at an organization called Operation Jersey Cares. She and her friends make these pillows and they are a big help for the wounded who have suffered leg and arm injuries. Sometimes the big bed pillows are too big and cumbersome to move around and the small pillows work just fine and the wounded really appreciate them. Ok, back to the Soldier, I asked him if he didn't mind, to tell us what happened to him.

He said sure and told us he was wounded on a Green on Blue incident. He asked me if I knew what "Green on Blue meant" I said yes....Green on Blue is the term that is used to describe an operation or mission that is jointly supported by the US, NATO forces and the Afghan Military. Now I know we have all been reading the newspaper and watching TV where there is a situation where an Afghan National Soldier or Policeman is training with us has opened fire on us and wounded and even killed a number of US military personnel and other NATO forces. This has been a bad situation and I hope we get a handle on this in the coming weeks. NO, what I really mean is days. Its one thing to be shot at by the enemy, but to be shot at by someone who you are training so they can take over the security of their own country when we leave, is mind

boggling. Sorry, but I need to get back to his story. He was on an outpost where on top of a mountain/hill with five other Soldiers and five Afghan Nationals. The six Soldiers were in a “U” shape type sandbag bunker. Only one of the five was friendly with him, the other four kept their distance. He even gave the Afghan National his watch and unit shirt. At about 0200 in the morning he was woken up to go on watch and was putting on his boots when all hell broke loose. As he looked out the opening of the bunker he saw four of the Afghan Nationals firing directly into his bunker with rifle and automatic weapons. He said it was a nightmare. He grabbed one of his buddies and held him to his body and covered him with his own body. This Soldier took few rounds into his legs and shrapnel wounds to other parts of his body. When the smoke cleared, four of his buddies were KIA and he was severely wounded. He would find out later, that the Afghan National he befriended was shot dead near his position on top of the hill. The other four ran down the hill and were killed by the rest of his Platoon who were at the bottom of the hill. UNBELIEVABLE.....We spent almost 25 minutes in his room listening to him tell us what happened. To say I was pissed off would be putting it mildly. I served my time in Viet Nam 45 years ago, but I sure as hell felt like putting on my boots and grabbing a weapon and heading over to kick some more ARSE again.....We all shook hands and wished him well and a speedy recovery from his wounds. It was a great way for us, to start the visit. Before we left the main building we stopped by to say hello to the Occupational Therapists in their office area. Most of them were out and about on the floor doing what they do best, taking care of the wounded and helping them get back to duty as soon as possible. We headed down to grab a bite to eat before we headed to the MATC Clinic.

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. In total, we gave out 39 \$50 gift cards on this visit for a total of \$1,950 and yes we could have given out more.

For the first time we have been at the MATC building we saw two young sons of two soldiers in the room and they were not visiting their father. They were being treated for an injury and for a medical problem. This was a little hard to watch, but to be honest as we watched their families looking at them doing their Rehab, the look on the family faces were the same as if they were looking at someone who had been wounded in combat. You sometimes look at life and say, that with all that is going on with the families of the men and women who have been wounded serving their country, you would think they would be spared of all the other sickness, medical issues and other stuff that befalls a family because of what they are going through, but that is not the case.

And sometimes, I get pissed that I missed a putt on the golf course. I HAVE NO REASON TO BE PISSED. God bless the men and women who wear the uniform of our military services today.

We saw one individual walking around the track with two prosthetic legs with one of them all the way up to his belt line. It almost looked like an artificial hip. There was a medical technician walking right behind him. At one point he told him to stop, bent down, took out what looked like an Allen wrench, took off one leg and made a few adjustments, put it back on and

started walking again. We all wanted to stop and say hello, but he was busy with his Rehab and we did not want to prevent him from doing so. Another tough moment as we all watched him walked around the MATC track.

We all met up with two gentlemen from a group called the Eagle Cane Project. Listed below is their web site so you can read up and find out what they do. I would need another page to tell you. www.EagleCane.com They were passing out hand carved wooden canes to some of the wounded that would need some type of cane support to help them walk. Some of these canes were carved in great detail and come from all different locations across the country. They were presenting a cane to a Marine in a wheel chair and asked me if I would read off the certificate that comes with each cane. I said yes and felt good after I did. It was great to meet another organization that is also doing great things to help out the wounded. We swapped cards and I gave both of them a Detachment coin and brochure. They asked for us to be in the picture with the Marine who received the cane and we gladly stood behind him and smiled. What a way to end another great visit.

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 gave two Marine and five 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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"Wars may be fought with weapons, but they are won by men. It is the spirit of the men who follow and the man who leads that gains victory"

Journal, 1933

Major George S. Patton, Jr.

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