



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

Walter Reed National Military Medical Center Trip Report for December 2012 &
January 2013

This report will cover the last two hospital visits we made, one in December and the one last week on Thursday, January 31st. In December three Detachment members made the visit, Marc Purcelli, Eddie Neas & Kevin Meara. Last week's visit Marc, Kevin, Keith Butler and I made the trip. As most of you know, the war in Afghanistan is winding down and there have been no new wounded sent to Walter Reed the past 45 days or so. During the last two visits we saw no one in the main building. All of our focus was to spend as much time as we could in the MATC building location visiting with the wounded who were going through their daily rehab to recover from injuries.

We left as usual from Newark Penn Station on the 0620 train and we picked up Mark and Kevin at the Trenton, NJ station and then we all headed down to Union Station in Washington, DC. We would meet up with Don Patterson at the Marine Liaison section in the main building. Don is a member of our Detachment who lives in southern 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.

During the December visit we met a gentleman sitting in a wheel chair outside the main building wearing a blue baseball hat with the insignia of the 315th Airborne. We all stopped to say hello and Marc proceeded to give him a Detachment coin. He told us he was a World War II veteran and was waiting for a ride. We said Semper Fi and headed off to the new Navy Exchange as we had some time to kill before we could start our visit.

When we arrived back at the main building Jim was still sitting in his wheel chair waiting for his ride. Of course we stopped to talk with him again. He was waiting for the van to take him back to the U.S. Soldiers & Airmen's home in DC. FYI, this home was established in 1851 as an asylum for old and disabled veterans. He had to have been sitting there for almost an hour, so we wanted to keep him company and started asking him a bunch of questions. I asked him if he was a paratrooper with the 315th? He shot right back and said NO, he was part of a crew on a C-47 (named DARICE) that did drop off paratroopers, but he had no interest in doing so. We all laughed. He told us he was shot down and rescued by a British Army unit and was glad that they got to him before the German Army did. He was shot down during the Bridge Too Far Mission. He spent a total of 30 years with the US Army Air Corps and US Air Force and served both in Korea and Viet Nam. Thanks to Kevin Meara for looking up some of this information

and letting me add it to the report. Jim was as sharp as a tack and I know we are all glad that we took the time to stop by and say hello to this World War II veteran. What a great way to start off the visit. We then headed over to the MATC building to meet up with Don.

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.

Once we arrived at the MATC building we broke up as individuals and tried to talk with as many of the wounded we could while they were doing their rehab exercises. At times it is hard to start a conversation with someone who is doing their rehab. Their focus is on what they are doing and listening to the therapists who are working with them. It almost feels like we are getting in the way, so we are very careful not to prevent them from doing their rehab. Even the family members are watching them as they do their rehab and you can see the strain on their faces as well. We don't get to pass out any of the Afghan military blankets we have as we have been asked not to do this as it takes away from their rehab time. But we do slip one or two by with a few of the wounded when they leave the MATC location. We give out the gift cards, coins and bears in Dress Blues to all the Moms, wives and kids we see. It does put a little smile on their faces and that is what we are trying to do. We saw some of the wounded we have seen on previous visits and some of them recognize us right away. We all say hello and shake hands. The MATC location is an amazing place. To see all of the latest medical technology and the dedicated staff of people doing all that they can to make the wounded look forward to a better and more comfortable life down the road is wonderful. You could spend 15 minutes or 15 days here and always come away feeling good about what is being done at Walter Reed.

As usual most of the wounded we saw were all injured during some type of IED explosion and unfortunately have suffered the loss of a limb, and in some cases, multiple limbs. We were able to visit with Marines, Soldiers and Navy Corpsman and during the January visit, a Navy Seal. On the December visit we did get to visit with two Republic of Georgia Soldiers and their wives. Unfortunately, we did not speak their language and it was hard to communicate with them, but one of the Georgia Soldiers did say we were with the "Marines", so we gave them a few gift cards and the Detachment coin. And to think when I was in high school, I had no interest in learning another language. Some of us had no idea how much we could have learned and how much better off we could have been if we were able to communicate while we were serving in some far off foreign country.

As we always do we introduce ourselves to everyone we meet and give them all the items we that bring down during our visits. On the January visit we gave out or shall I say, snuck by one Marine & one Navy Afghan blankets to the two of the wounded we saw at the MATC center. We also presented them with a Detachment coin, a print

from Tom Miller, get well cards from kids of various organizations and Marine Dress Blue Teddy bears for the Moms, wives or kids that may be in the MATC. We also pass out a few \$50 gift cards and tell them to get some dinner or lunch on our Detachment and the many other organizations that donate to our Marines Care program. 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 this one. 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.

Sometimes we see something that we are not prepared for and in a sense catches us off guard. There was a young boy lying on one of the tables doing rehab exercises with one of the Therapists. As we looked at him, he was too young to have been in the military so after a few minutes I walked over to speak with his mother. I found out he is the son of an Army Soldier, is 14 years old and is suffering from some type of cancer to one of his legs. He has had a few operations and treatments and will have a few more down the road. I gave his mother a few gift cards, a bear, Detachment coin and a watch for her son. She said thank you and I shook their hands and walked away. Let's all say a prayer for him and all of the wounded we have visited with the past few months. Some of them will need all the help they can get.

We also purchased pizzas and soda during the January visit and had them delivered to the MATC center for the wounded, their families and the staff to enjoy. A little break from hospital chow, which I have to say isn't bad and you don't spend a lot of money buying it. This was greatly appreciated by all.

We passed out 58 \$50 gift cards (\$2,900) during the last two visits. Thanks to all of the people and organizations who have donated to our Detachment's Marines Care program over the past year. It does make a BIG difference. .

Just listening to some of the men and women who have been severely wounded, even losing body parts, who say that they can't wait to get back with their Squad, Platoon or Unit is so inspiring. They certainly have the opportunity to retire and never serve again, but a lot of them are adamant about continuing to serve their country and being with their buddies again. They are an absolutely amazing bunch of men and women who wear the uniform of our Military Services today. It was another Great visit and we all look forward to the next one.

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. As you can see, we do a lot during these past two visits.

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 did a lot during these past two visits. 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. 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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"When men working together, successfully attain to a high standard of orderliness, deportment and response to each other, they develop the cohesive strength that will carry them through any great crisis".

Brigadier General S.L.A Marshall
The Armed Forces Officer, 1950

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