



JULY **THE ATLAS**

704TH EN CO NEWSLETTER

american warfighters

SGT Phillip Ragus and SGT Dominic Knott

SELFLESS SERVICE MOST GAVE SOME, SOME GAVE ALL

By CPT Joshua Yarbrough

22JUL2013 - The month of July has certainly been eventful for the 704th Engineer Company, as well as across our Task Force. From combat operations on the 4th of July to honoring a fallen hero, we are feeling the full measure of our service in Afghanistan. Our high operational tempo has kept us busy, but we found time to reflect on favorite memories from back home in this issue.

For me personally, I do not believe that any specific memory stirs me. I have a series of things I'm very proud of and certainly I miss my loving family. Instead, what I found this month is more intrinsic to the character of American citizens. We are a society that values our individual freedoms and ability to directly shape our futures. We have the ability to enjoy life to the fullest and it is ensured by one of the greatest living documents ever produced in history. Furthermore, I know that it is earned by a few - so that it may be given freely to many.

July is a month where I for the first time really understood the cost of our freedom. So often we take our liberty for granted and pay lip service to the price. Our freedom is guaranteed by the sweat, tears, and blood of



our service men and women. PFC Errol D. Milliard gave his life on 4 July 2013 while conducting combat operations in Afghanistan. I did not know him well, but his actions were well known throughout the 595th Sapper Company. He embodied the spirit and character that makes our Army strong. His willingness to complete any mission and pay any cost was dearly noted. My prayers are with him, his family, and his fellow brothers in arms.

If this is my favorite memory, then I must it is because I cherish the 4th of July as well as every other American holiday that recognizes the sacrifice of our service men and women. The selfless service of my Soldiers and all those who have gone before us is the very lifeblood of this country. It has been my privilege to serve beside PFC Milliard, the 595th Sapper Company, our Soldiers, and the many other service members from the United States, ISAF, and Afghanistan.

My challenge to everyone this month is to enjoy the summer, your friends, your families and your vacations. I only ask that you take a moment to reflect upon the sacrifices being made everyday on your behalf and be thankful. You can rest assured though that the 704th Engineer Company will continue to clear the way and be home before you know it.

“CLEAR THE WAY!”



CPT Joshua Yarbrough in the field.

FIRST PLATOON

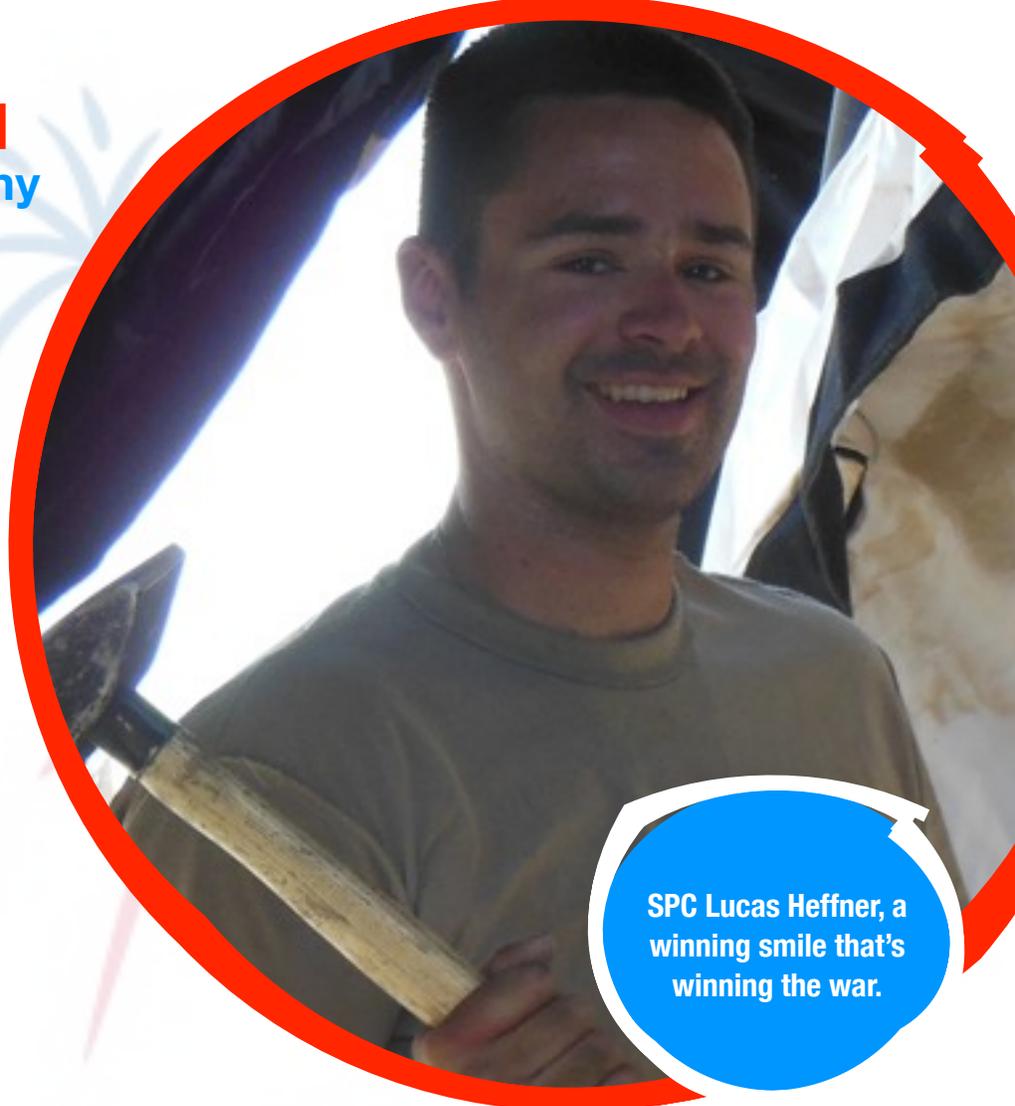
my friends, my home

By SPC Lucas Heffner

17JUL2013 - Before deployment and during mobilization there were definite moments to contemplate what I would miss the most throughout the deployment. Really the goal was to bring as many of the things I would miss, or reminders of the things I would miss, with me to Afghanistan. I knew I would miss my truck, I knew I would miss wearing jeans, and I knew I would miss working on a beard every day. So as a result I brought a hot wheels version of my truck with me to Afghanistan, I left my favorite pair of jeans at Mom and Dad's with the belt already in the loops just waiting to be put on first thing when I get home, and I secretly work on my beard on missions. (Don't tell leadership) What I didn't realize is how much I would miss friends and family. To be realistic, my family situation is easier than most. I am not married, nor do I have any kids so it is easy to tone down my discomfort from being away from my relationships. At least I'm not missing a year of childhood or marriage. So I applaud those guys for showing strength as we approach the end of this tour. Really what I miss the most is the time I've lost. I'm 25 and it is difficult not to think about what I would be doing if I were in the states. We are proud to be here and proud to be a part of something that is greater than ourselves, but there's also a clear understanding that several months have passed. We have changed, but

our friends and families have also changed. I guess my point is that I miss being involved in those relationships that mean the most and that I fear feeling disconnected from those people upon our return to the States. It can be difficult knowing that your friends have laughed without you and that your family has celebrated several holidays without you.

All of that goes to say really it isn't my jeans, my beard, or my truck that I miss. It would be nice to have those things again but they are so irrelevant in comparison to the importance of relationships with family and friends. So we will continue to call, we will continue to write, and we will continue to chat online even if it feels like there is nothing to say. So answer your phone, write us back, and chat with us even when it annoys you and most of all remember we are already packing things up to come home.



SPC Lucas Heffner, a winning smile that's winning the war.

SECOND PLATOON

its a whole new backyard

By SPC Louis Bollasina

15JUL2013 - Fourth of July for many over here is usually spent back home with their closest friends and family. Some go for weekends at a nearby lake house. Some go to a family member's house for a back yard cook out, wiffle ball and cold drinks. The night always ends perfectly with a firework show that you can see from any backyard in the neighborhood. Some spend it going with their significant other down town to a nearby city enjoying the festivities and a professional show put on, that lights up the city skyline.

But this year was a little different for the soldiers of 2nd platoon. For us here on RCP 68 it was just another day on the road doing our job as we have day in and day out. But as it was for me I'm sure it was the same for others, there was still a little bit of holiday spirit in the back our minds as we headed down the road. This year Fourth of July had a little bit of a different feeling, a feeling of patriotism, and a sense of pride that this year we were directly impacting our families back home. This year we celebrated in a completely different manner. We celebrated by executing our mission to the best of our ability.

As I looked around after getting off the

road I saw many guys gathered in groups reminiscing about past holidays and ones still to come. Some were telling funny stories about a firework show gone wrong, or about times spent with their loved ones. This Fourth of July I'm sure will forever be remembered by most; of a holiday spent with a new family, the Soldiers of 2nd platoon. This year, as we lay down on our cots as we all have many times before, there was a feeling as if we could almost still see the fireworks back home.

SPC Louis
Bollasina geared up
and ready.



THIRD PLATOON

the legacy of family

By SSG Zach Rostan

15JUL2013 - It's the time of year where we celebrate our independence. I am thankful for the ability to serve my country, a job done by less than 1% of the American population. Because of the Army, I have learned to be grateful for the things that I have. I am grateful because someone before us has given their life to ensure that I have the freedoms that I enjoy, and the ability to provide for my children because of them.

We been in Afghanistan 7 months now. It is the time of year where everyone wants to be outdoors and enjoy themselves, which makes me miss home a little more. I definitely miss my kids. I miss being able to wrestle with my son, Kole. I also miss being with my daughter, Zoie. I only had the opportunity to spend 2 days with her after she was born. I am lucky enough to be able to Skype my family every now and then. Zoie started crawling the other day, and I was extremely proud as I watched her through Skype.

I also miss the 4th of July. I miss spending time with the family. Having family BBQ's and shooting fireworks. For sure if I miss anything it is spending time with my family. Thats the times that I cherish the most. Life is far to short to not make the most of the time you have with your loved ones. I love

SSG Zach Rostan leading Soldiers on patrol.



riding my four wheeler around the deer lease, scouting the land looking for signs of deer to find a spot for me and Kole to hunt. Family is the most important thing to me. Being able to spend time with my Dad, and Grand Father, hunting is a time I cherish the most. It makes me remember when I was a kid, and my Dad, and Grand Father spent so much time teaching me how to hunt. Because of those two men, I am able to teach my son to do the same. I am more than ready to be home and spend time with my family.

One of the things that makes this country so great is that so many people come together from all walks of life. This is extremely evident in the Army. You meet people from all kinds of different back grounds, but everyone has the same purpose. Our purpose is simple, it is to protect the innocent, and those unable to defend themselves. We are in a sense the sheepdogs that keep the wolves away. Because of people that have volunteered, our country will remain great. All in all there is far too much to talk about that makes America great. I hope everyone back home enjoyed their 4th of July, and we are all ready to be home and back with our families.

SPC Kevin Tischer, always alert!



SPC Kyle Glover, SPC Robert Fryar, SPC Andrew Munyon, taking a break from doing everyone else's job.



HEADQUARTERS

A little taste of stew from the melting pot

By SGT Dominic Knott

In the spirit of the 4th of July, I would like to mention a few things about America that I am personally looking forward to getting back to. Hold on tight as we take a trip around the world in what amounts to a trip back to America. I am looking forward to ordering pizza from my home, getting Mexican food from a drive thru, coffee from Brazil, while watching cartoons from Japan on my computer made in China, sitting on a chair made from Switzerland. I anticipate having a back yard BBQ cooking a cow from Texas while drinking beer from Germany. I cannot wait to see my wife whose ancestors came from Africa and my kids, who like my beer, were born in Germany. I'll be driving my KIA from Korea under insurance I buy on the internet (which could come from Iceland for all I know.) Riding my motorcycle with its parts made in Mexico on a road paved by workers from the USA. Going to Wal-Mart and Target where I can buy movies from Hollywood (lets face it a different planet) and see actors from Australia pretend to be gladiators from Rome.

I look forward to going to church where everyone comes together for one hour out of the week and smiles at each other. I anticipate getting back to drill where we will all tell our war stories and exaggerate our accomplishments, like all returning Soldiers, while we point and laugh about hot days, cold nights, long missions, and constant changes. The new Soldiers will look at us with awe as we puff out our chests and rub our new combat patches and badges. I look forward to getting back to the States to return to my family life and job, sleeping comfortably in my bed (made in the USA), in between sheets made in England. Finally falling into a well deserved slumber under the universal moon, waking only to scream, 'MERICA!!!, and pass back out.

FMT

Proud to be an American

By CPL William Storey

18JUL2013 - The Fourth of July, when most people think of this day it brings up fond memories of BBQs with family and friends. It's that crack of the fireworks and the smell of freedom in the air that really gets everyone together to remember what was done for our nation in 1776.

I still think of that man writing our nation's anthem while under attack from the British inside a bunker. The wounded men that stood up to tyranny and repression and said, "Not anymore will we stand for this."

It's not something that was just done a few hundred years ago; it is something that happens on a daily basis. It's the men and women that stood united in the fact that we will not be ruled by another country. We will not take persecution for doing what is our God given right to do. The fact is that every day is Independence Day. And it should be treated as so. There are men and women that stand at the gates of our beautiful country and hold their hands high and vow to protect and serve this nation and will not back down from any enemies foreign or domestic.

So stand tall and with a strong voice say that I'm proud that I am an American and I will be free because this is God's country and I am a free man or woman and my country is free every single day. There is nothing you can say or do about it as long as we stand united and fight for our freedom. Every year Soldiers sign that dotted line to possible sacrifice their own life for their country to remain free. I am an American Soldier. I am Warrior and a member of a team. I serve the people of the United States and live the Army Values. This is what I think about when I think about the Fourth of July and America.

SGT Horacio Sandoval, SPC Manuel Huizar, SPC Carlos Ortizmejia, and SPC Taylor Saiz commemorate "Mater", a wrecker that got more than a little beat up on a mission.



Soldiers being Soldiers FIREWORKS AND WAR STORIES

1. SGT Sheldon Childress all smiles before a patrol.
2. SPC Samuel "Planecrash" Poley.
3. SPC Josh Williams takes some time to talk with one of the interpreters



Soldiers being Soldiers FIREWORKS AND WAR STORIES



- 1. SGT Jay Witt and SPC Chris Overton, a night in an RG-31!!!
- 2. SPC Ryan Anthony takes aim.
- 3. SSG Hugh Finney growing a combat mustache, these are Army issue

**Soldiers
being
Soldiers**
FIREWORKS
AND
WAR
STORIES

1.



2.



- 1. SFC Toney Bussey proud to be an American.
- 2. 1LT Jared Schoen out of the TOC, and out on the road.
- 3. SPC Henry "Chico" Ciconte, beards free with every deployment.

3.



AWARDS AND PROMOTIONS

AWARDS:

AAM (Army Achievement Medal)

CPT Joshua Yarbrough
1LT Bennett Adams

CAB (Combat Action Badge):

SPC Joshua Basinger
SPC Andrew Blain
SPC Philip Clark
SPC Nathaniel Drebenstedt
SGT Adam Meggs
SPC Benjamin Miller
1LT Adam Mueller
SPC Samuel Poley
SPC Brian Roush
SPC Joshua Williams

HERO of the BATTLE:

SPC Benjamin Dickman
SGT Horacio Sandoval
SGT Daniel Adams

“The path we have chosen for the present is full of hazards, as all paths are; but it is one of the most consistent with our character and our courage as a nation and our commitments to the world. The cost of freedom is always high - but Americans have always paid it. And one path we shall never choose, and this is the path of surrender or submission. Our goal is not victory of might but the vindication of right - not peace at the expense of freedom, but both peace and freedom, here in this hemisphere and, we hope, around the world. God willing, that goal will be achieved.”

-John F. Kennedy

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TOP's Corner thinking about rethinking

By 1SG Clayton Elmore

20JUL2013 - It is about 60 days before we start heading back home with a stop at Ft. Bliss to DEMOB. All the Soldiers have done a good job here for the 704th Engineer Company. They have made me so proud, as if they were my own sons. They have become like family to us all.

As I sat here thinking about what Independence Day mean to me. It is not just about families and friends coming together for baseball, BBQ and fireworks. Until this year I worked the whole year for this day. What food and how much do I need to cook. I always cooked too much. Watching the kids running around have fun, or going to pool for a swim. Being in Afghanistan has changed my perspective.

With each military conflict, there have been remarkable stories of ordinary young Americans "rising to the occasion," demonstrating heroic acts and selfless service. Who can forget the men and woman that gave their life for this country. Like my older brother SSG Tomas P. Elmore February 1971.

Ronald Reagan said, "It's also a time to reflect on what it means to be an American and the sacrifices made by those to secure the freedoms we have today. Fortunately for us, during America's darkest hours, God has consistently blessed us with ordinary people who do extraordinary things, including making the ultimate sacrifice to secure and maintain our freedom." The Soldiers of the 704th Engineer Company are from the main streets and the farms of America.



1SG Clayton Elmore, top of the food chain!

