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Shane Wright, Shelbyville, IL

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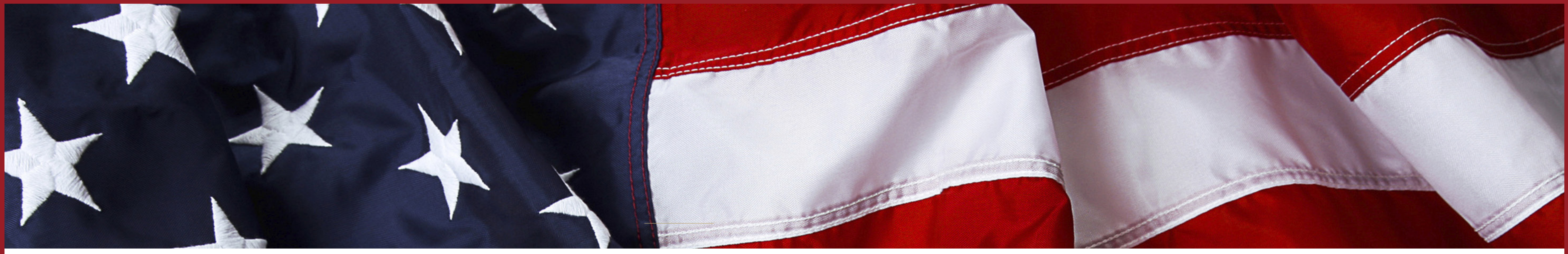


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Shane Wright

Age: 28

Branch of Military:
U.S. Army

Rank: Specialist
E-4

Dates of Service: July 2007-November 2010

Deployments: Afghanistan-Nangarhar Province, January 2009-January 2010

EIU Police officer



Shane Wright

Shelbyville, IL



“Tattoos are a way to express what happened -- to kind of let other people know that. We veterans pretty much know what veteran tattoos look like. It’s common ground, more or less. It’s respect.”

“I enlisted. It’s what I wanted to do ever since I can remember. I picked my job as a cav scout, a cavalry scout, and went to Fort Knox, Kentucky, for basic training and my AIT. From there I went to Fort Drum, New York.”



U.S. Army photo

“As a cavalry scout, you go out in small teams and you just kind of watch over a certain area. So you’re looking for any sort of enemy troop movement. Anything like that, you can call it in. What we did was essentially the same thing, except we just didn’t call it in. We just went and dealt with it. It was a lot easier. It was faster. Because where we were, we didn’t have that option, to call back.

“Where we were at, they were passing through that area to go elsewhere. Like, they were coming in from Pakistan, coming in and scattering out... if we would have called, they would have been gone.

“We were pretty lucky. We were pretty blessed that nothing happened. A lot of things happened, but nothing serious happened.” Wright wears a bracelet in memory of the fallen. “Just the fallen in general. I was lucky enough not to lose anybody.”

Wright’s tattoos are a work in progress, with more images still being added. “I wanted another tattoo, so I thought, let’s do something that actually means something to you and not just a random tattoo of something that means nothing, that you don’t have a story behind. I wanted to do an American freedom arm. It’s all going to be color once the picture’s done.”



“I got this one while I was in the Army, in the States. It’s a tribal flag. I’ve got the eagle for, you know, freedom.”



“I’ve got my snake, kind of like my ‘Don’t tread on me’ snake. It’s just, ‘Don’t mess with America,’ more or less. I’ve got my soldier above a pile of skulls.” The skulls represent the number of enemy casualties during Wright’s time in Afghanistan.



“Afghanistan was awesome. I loved it. I’d go back. We would go to villages and do what they call a ‘meet and greet.’ So, just meet with the elders, see if they needed anything, you know, ask them if they have any problems with Taliban or anybody that’s causing trouble and then if they did, then we basically just set up in the village and wait for the bad people to roll in and take care of business.

“They’re always having problems. Sometimes those problems were tribal related. It was this tribe messing with this tribe. It wasn’t even that they were bad people. Most of the time, they were.”



U.S. Army photo by PFC Simon Lee

“Both of my grandfathers served in the military. They were both in World War II. You know, if there’s two guys I could share some coffee with, it would be them two. They could definitely tell you some stories, I’m sure.”



U.S. Army photo

“I had a lot of nicknames: Shane Tango, Tango, Firestarter, Righteous, Sugar Shane, Shooter Shane McGavin. Firestarter came from when we were freezing our booties off up in the mountains and I started a fire. In the Nangarhar Province, it’s the hottest province in Afghanistan. So down on the ground? It’s hot. But once you get up in the mountains? Mountains are cold.”