

This is Joshua Kauppila interviewing David Ruppel.. and May 3 of 2003. Excuse me.
March 3, 2003, I didn't leave for country til mid April 2003.

Could you state your birthday?

April 21, 1985 how you stationed?

Actually, Afghanistan.

where are you from?

Ishpeming Michigan where in Afghanistan were you?

I was in 3 different places, one was Kandahar City, it's not quite a FOB it's a PRT, a

you can look that up. umm, and the second one was FOB

Westwood High School, 50 kilometers north by Taria Koest, and the third one was,

finally.

Your mother and father's names?

Randy and Tammy duty in those places?

Five rotations, pretty much body guards for whoever had to whatever.

when did you come to Northern Michigan University?

Originally in 2....originally the winter of 2005 that?

we hit and only after we got attacked, we were doing a patrol and we got hit by and

Why did you choose? (usa device)

closest and best deal with National Guard

Were you working with a lot of the Afghanistan civilians at the time and what was that

your field of study at northern here?

Zoology, we rotated our shifts, like one group would work the front gate which means

to work with the inter. ex. the local nationals, like you'd have to bring

you said uh, you joined with the national guard when you were coming in? his with

I joined with National Guard, beginning part my junior year in high school, still on a

seventeen at the time why the best, I mean they're less knowledgeable about what's

going around in general, they just know what's going around in their hometowns within

What was your, did you have to leave college for active duty? first become...ummm.

Yes, I did

What were the conditions like for a US soldier within National Guard? What were the

what was that experience going from school to that situation, like?

uhh, at first it didn't really hit me, it just, doing what they told me to do so, you know you

leave school, you're like, 'alright, well, I got to go do.. go fight a war so, you're just

like...you know, you just don't notice it. And then later on, you look back at it, and

you're like 'well, I kinda skipped out on a little part of life to go do this' but it was half,

something that I don't regret, so.... in the tent so it didn't really matter. Or it'd be so hot

in the day and no AC.

Umm what are some reactions that you got, when you were leaving from your parents or

family or friends when they knew you were going to be deployed? all about your

well everyone was really sad obviously, because they weren't going to see me for a year

and were kind of scared about my whereabouts. It seemed like, family members tried to

be as tough as they can, for a little bit, and then right before I leave, they just all break

down. is a weird experience. You go around you see kids playing in water that's diluted

with feces and urine and all that stuff. You are just like, how are they playing in that, like

So when was your tour of duty in Iraq? "shit trucks" dumping into the rivers that they

are swimming in and you're just like, you don't understand how it's working, like how

I got deployed, or I got the initial orders to get deployed May 5 of 2005. Excuse me, March 5, 2005, I didn't leave for country til mid April 2005.

Where in Iraq were you stationed?

Actually, Afghanistan.

Afghanistan, Alright, where in Afghanistan were you?

I was in 3 different places, one was Kandahar City, it's not quite a FOB it's a PRT, a provincial reconstruction team, you can look that up. umm, and the second one was FOB Tiigiran which was, I'd say, 80 kilometers north by Tarin Kowt, and the third one was, finally,

And what was your duty in those places?

Force protection, pretty much body guards for whoever had to whatever.

Did you run into any active combat situations in that?

near the end of my tour we got attacked, we were doing a patrol and we got hit by and IED (improvised explosive device)

Were you working with a lot of the Afghanistan civilians at the time and what was that like?

yeas and no, we rotated our shifts, like one group would work the front gate which means he'd have to...uh, work with the inter, err, the local nationals, like you'd have to bring them in, you'd talk to them, do whatever. So you kind of intermingle a little bit with them, but you didn't, like, fully. you just dealt with them at the front gate. That was a different experience, to say the least, I mean they're less knowledgeable about what's going around, in general, they just know what's going around in their hometown within their location. It's a really weird experience actually when you first become...umm.

What were the conditions like for a US soldier within National Guard? What were the conditions, living/working conditions like over there?

It varied from PRT to FOB, I mean when we first got there, actually, we had a swimming pool we lived in harden barracks, you know we had air conditioning and all that stuff. But when we moved up to FOB Tiigiran, we were staying in a tent, you know, at night it would get really cold, we didn't really have a heater, well we did, but it didn't work half, it didn't...there were so many holes in the tent so it didn't really matter. Or it'd be so hot in the day and no AC.

Do you have any stories or recollections or anything you'd like to add about your experience in Afghanistan?

Uh, there's so many stories, I couldn't really give half of them, some were just us being, you know just being bored, having fun. Others, going on a mission, seeing the culture, which is a weird experience. You go around you see kids playing in water that's diluted with feces and urine and all that stuff. You are just like, how are they playing in this, like, they don't know any better or you see uh, "shit trucks" dumping into the rivers that they are swimming in and you're just like, you don't understand how it's working, like how

people are surviving and stuff. it's just weird to experience that people are still riding around donkeys but yet they have cell phones and they have some kind of cars but they are getting ready to broke down. They're buildings are made out of mud, but yet some are made out of cement, and you are just like, how is it mixing, 20th century and like, the 18th century it's really weird.

Was there anything about the culture of the people that was strikingly different from what you're used to?

probably the lack of knowledge, it's kind of frightening, I mean we can't really do anything about it. I mean, we're working on it, we're trying to get them schools and stuff, they just didn't know, like, what was good, what was bad for them like I said kids were playing in that water. The hygiene, really, it was a big shock everyone told me that they were smelly and I'm just like what do you mean by smelly, like, you'll find out. You go over there and it smells like they didn't shower for, you know, two, three weeks and everyone's like that. You're like; whoa, that's a big culture shock and number two the females are all covered up, you're are used to seeing females doing what they want in America, over there they got told by the husbands or whoever's in charge of them, and their faces are covered and they can't do anything. It's kind of shocking in that aspect.

when did you end up leaving Afghanistan, then?

It was April of the next year

what was your reaction, did you know that it was going to be just one year?

yeah, I knew that.

Alright so when the time came you were prepared for it?

yeah, I was [] actually, ready to get back home, see my friends and my parents.

was it hard getting back into civilian-student life afterwards and what was that experience, that transition like, having that experience?

I wouldn't really say hard, it was different, because before you went you were like: I know how to study, I know how to, like, take tests, I know how to do all this stuff. And then you come back and you are used to, when you're over there they just tell you what you are going to do. They are like; alright, here's our orders, here's what we want you to do, go do it and you go do it. And when you come back here and you're like I just want you to tell me what to do, you're so used to it, it's hard to get back on the transition. It's just really, I don't know how to explain it, I mean it's like going from being in high school for, going *from* high school to skipping out on like 5 years, almost, and then going right back to college. I mean that one year felt like 5 years sometimes.

Are you currently active in the Military Science Department here on campus?

Yes, I am.

How has the experience helped or influenced your role at Northern Michigan University or specifically the MS department?

I've already been in the military, so I've got one up on everyone that hasn't been in there and I've been deployed so there's another up. So my experience just, I know what I'm doing, a little bit more consistency, and when I'm doing it, and people are learning for the first time or relearning it for the second time. I've been doing this for, how many...five years now, roughly and I've been deployed. so I mean, It's weird because you're teaching people that are going to be teaching people, you know they are going to be lieutenants they are going to be leading and you're teaching them and you're going to be a lieutenant, yourself. So you're just like this is kind of weird, because if I screw up they could screw up many lives.

Is there anything else you'd like to add or say about your experience, in general or specific, like I said?

it was an experience of a lifetime, I'd never take it back. I go over again if I had the chance. Like there's nothing that would hold me back anymore mean I enjoyed it I had 6 great friends over there you know people that took care of me, just one big family and you know a picture worth a thousand words when you see the pictures you might look at it and be like look at this desert it doesn't look that great. but you know, to me it was home for a year. I just enjoyed everything about it, summers were horrible it was 120 some days 160 other days it all depends. you'd be sweating just standing there and some days it didn't even look like you were sweating because it was evaporating it was so hot. I wouldn't take it back ever, I mean I got something most people don't have unless you're military I've already seen a foreign country that's been hostile and experience a culture that not too many people know about. I remember when we first invaded Iraq and Afghanistan, like I didn't even know those countries the first time I've ever heard of them, you know, and now people are like 'Afghanistan and Iraq, Middle east' It's just weird to experience the culture.

I forgot to ask at the beginning, when you were serving over there, what was your rank? I was a Specialist, E4 if that helps.