

Why We Serve:

Sgt. Ethan Wilson*

173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

By Sgt. Michael Sword



COMBAT OUTPOST MCCLAIN, AFGHANISTAN—U.S. Army Spc. Ethan Wilson made the decision to join the Army when he was 14 years old. Five years ago, he was a sophomore in high school and his brother Thomas was deployed to Afghanistan with the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team. Today, Wilson finds himself at Combat Outpost McClain in Afghanistan's Logar Province, a world away from the small town of Maurertown, Va., where he grew up and only miles from the place where his brother last stood.

"My brother was killed in action in 2007 in Paktika with the 1st of the 503rd," said Wilson.

The loss of his brother was the catalyst for Wilson's Army

service, and as soon as he graduated high school he followed his brother and joined the Army. After losing one son to the war in Afghanistan, his parents were hesitant about his decision at first.

"I told them I wanted to join, and at first they were skeptical about it," he said. "Once I went off to basic and came back they were all really supportive and proud of me."

While he was in basic combat training, Wilson did everything he could to make sure he got to airborne school. Still following the path of his brother, he made it through his training and graduated airborne school. In a stroke of luck or fate, he found himself on a plane to Germany to 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment, 173rd ABCT, the same brigade that Thomas served with years ago. While

*Ethan's status at the time this article was written was Spc Ethan Wilson (Gold Star Brother of Pfc Thomas Wilson). He is currently serving with D Co 2-505 PIR 3rd BCT 82nd Airborne



he didn't enlist as an infantryman, he did find his way to the front of the fight as a cavalry scout.

"I knew I wanted to go combat arms. When it came down to it, cav scout just sounded cooler," he said. "Finding out I was going to Germany to be in the same unit was pretty sweet."

Knowing exactly what he signed up for, Wilson knew he would eventually be headed for war. Now deployed, he patrols the dusty roads of Afghanistan's Logar Province as a team leader in 3rd Platoon. Around his wrist, a metal bracelet bearing his brother's name carries the memory of Thomas wherever the younger Wilson goes.

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"The bracelet I wear every day is definitely my motivation," he said.

As his original enlistment comes to a close, following in his brother's footsteps and the support of his family has led him somewhere he really wants to be.

"My whole family has been really supportive along the way, so that's definitely helped," he said.

"I'm definitely planning on re-enlisting," he said. "I love what I do. I enjoy every day of it, so I might as well keep doing what I enjoy."