

1-26-2018

## Military tattoos on display at EIU

Stan Polanski

Follow this and additional works at: [http://thekeep.eiu.edu/lib\\_exhibits\\_designsofduty\\_press](http://thekeep.eiu.edu/lib_exhibits_designsofduty_press)

---

### Recommended Citation

Polanski, Stan, "Military tattoos on display at EIU" (2018). *Designs of Duty Press and Publicity*. 8.  
[http://thekeep.eiu.edu/lib\\_exhibits\\_designsofduty\\_press/8](http://thekeep.eiu.edu/lib_exhibits_designsofduty_press/8)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the 2018 - Designs of Duty at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Designs of Duty Press and Publicity by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact [tabruns@eiu.edu](mailto:tabruns@eiu.edu).



**Take Down  
Heart  
Disease**

**6 to 8 pm • Thursday, Feb**

*Held at Brick House Bar & Grill, CH*

This men's event is **FREE**,  
but reservations are needed.



Subscribe ▾

News ▾

Sports ▾

Classifieds ▾

Community ▾

Opinion ▾

Obituaries

FEATURED

# Military tattoos on display at EIU

'Designs of Duty' opened Monday

Stan Polanski Daily News 11 hrs ago



Shane Wright's platoon. Submitted photo

     

It's been eight years since he returned home from Afghanistan, but Shelbyville resident Shane Wright gets a reminder of that time anytime he sees the tattoos on his right arm: an eagle, a "don't tread on me" snake, and a skeleton in combat attire.



"It's just a way to write down my story without forgetting it," he said.

Wright, 28, is one of seven veterans who served over a 45-year period featured in a new exhibit at Eastern Illinois University's Booth Library. "Designs of Duty," which opened Monday, displays the veterans' military tattoos and details the meanings behind them.

Most of the tattoos on Wright's arm aren't finished yet. They've been outlined, but he said he hasn't found time to fill them in with color.

The skeleton, pictured above a mound of skulls, is "a dead guy at a mountain of pain." It symbolizes both friends and enemies, Wright said.

That explanation sounds grim, but Wright said war for him wasn't hell.

"I had a great time," he said. "It's one of those things — you've trained for it for two years, three years, whatever, and you finally get to go and do your job. I had fun."

Wright's platoon was tasked with stabilizing an Afghanistan area by beating back the Taliban. He said they'd meet with villagers and deal with their problems.

"Most of them wanted our help and wanted us to be there," he said.

In multiple combat missions, only one in Wright's platoon was injured.

"We had a guy that got shot through the calf," he said. "Luckily, that was the only injury we sustained as a platoon, which was great. We got really lucky there."

In his earliest childhood memories, Wright declared he wanted to be "an Army guy." That was his dream, and he lived it. But in November 2010, with his Army service over, Wright had to figure out what to do next.

"I had only thought out as far as, 'I'm in high school. I'm going to the military.'" Wright said. "And that's it. You go from living your dream in the military to nothing. You don't know what to do with yourself and I think that's part of the biggest problem with guys getting out."

Wright figured it out, however. He's an officer with the EIU Police.

It's been almost two decades since the War in Afghanistan began, but the military still has a presence there. And Wright thinks it will for a long time. Otherwise, the Taliban will take control.

"It will always go on," he said. "It will not stop. That's just how it is."

The father of three said his time in Afghanistan changed his outlook on life. After returning to the U.S., he said it was frustrating to see so many Americans struggling with seemingly insignificant matters.

"You just see so many people complaining about everything and they don't understand how good they've really got it," Wright said. "Your power goes out for an hour and you're up in arms because you can't charge your phone. Well, there's a lot worse things going on than your power being out for an hour. I guess my perspective changed. Life isn't as bad as a lot of people think it is."

Stan Polanski can be reached at [stan.polanski@shelbyvilledailyunion.com](mailto:stan.polanski@shelbyvilledailyunion.com) or 217-774-2161 ext. 1.