

Through the Lens

A Soldier's Story

No running water, no refrigeration, raw sewage — that's just a little description of the area where Brandon Sandefur ('07) lives. It's also right in the middle of a warzone. Northeast Afghanistan is not necessarily the place where most people want to get a job out of college, but it was Sandefur's first choice. Not only did he enlist in the U.S. Army because he could immediately work in his field of study, but it was an opportunity to serve his country at the same time.

Working as a public affairs broadcast specialist, he's one of the people who brings you the Middle East images you see on the nightly news. "My job is to tell the army story of what we're doing in Afghanistan," says Sandefur.

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A former communications major at Bethel, Sandefur has been interested in broadcasting since high school. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in May of 2006 and has been working as what the news business would call a "one-man-band reporter." That means he shoots, writes, edits and voices his stories into a package that mainly airs for the American Forces Network or AFN. Though his video is also picked up by major networks, he says he doesn't actually get to watch it, unless it's posted on YouTube.

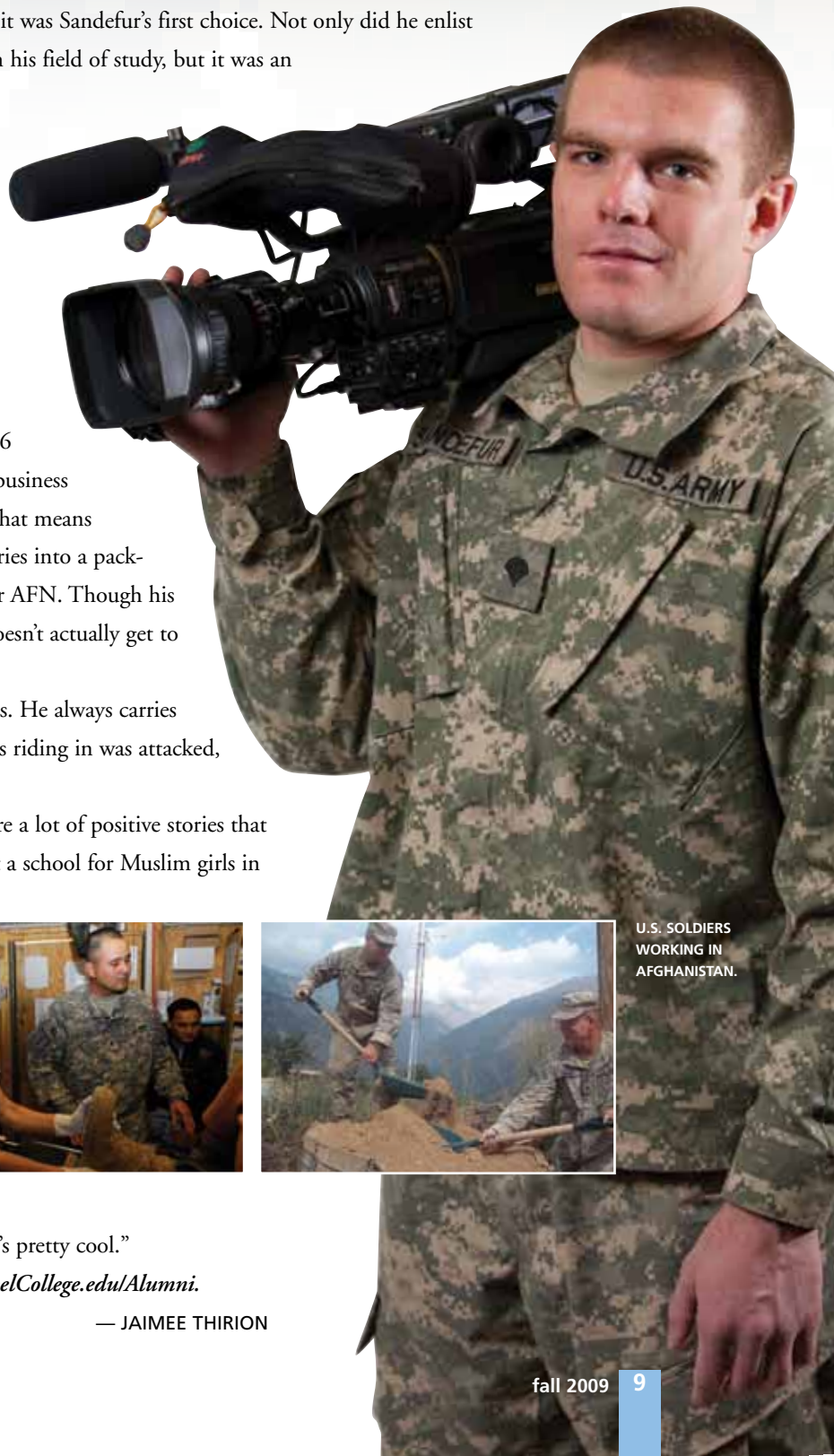
Sandefur says the work can be nerve-racking at times. He always carries his rifle and will never forget the time the convoy he was riding in was attacked, though he was not immediately near the violence.

Despite the dangerous conditions, he knows there are a lot of positive stories that people don't know about, like the time the soldiers built a school for Muslim girls in Konar. "They [students] were thrilled that we built them a school."

Seeing the joy of those children was memorable to Sandefur. At the same time he got to show the entire world something good that was going on in one of the most dangerous places on the planet. "It's not something a lot of people get to see. I get to see the normal everyday life of people in Afghanistan. It's pretty cool."

🌀 To watch some of Sandefur's videos, go to www.BethelCollege.edu/Alumni.

— JAIMEE THIRION



U.S. SOLDIERS WORKING IN AFGHANISTAN.