

# KUGLER

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to throw them a ball but they didn't understand and just looked at us."

Although some of the men in the unit looked into the cost of bringing a dog home, they found it to be too expensive.

"I would have loved to bring one back," Kugler said. "The dogs were beautiful and really boosted moral."

Other uninvited visitors were ants in their beds, large camel spiders, scorpions, King Cobras and large rats.

"It was like the wild kingdom out there," he said.

When he was not on patrols or in the Bee Hut, Kugler passed the time by playing card games, chess or even an occasional baseball game. One day members of the Afghanistan Army were on their base and watched a baseball game.

"They joined in after a while and pitched the balls for us," he said. "Some of them had a really good arm."

One of Kugler's duties was to interact with members of the community, like a meet-

and-greet patrol. Although the soldiers needed an interpreter when they visited the local village, most of the residents were happy to see them.

The children were especially curious as Kugler's unit distributed items like coloring books, crayons, pencils and other types of school supplies.

"We tried to interact with the children," he said. "They are the ones who will grow up and be in control of the country."

When asked if he heard gun fire or saw any action, Kugler's guard immediately showed. "I really can't talk about that; we did see some action," he said.

Trying to get back into the swing of daily life, Kugler still finds himself re-adjusting to driving, being in a crowd and the quietness of home.

"There was constant noise of the Humvees, helicopters and generators," he said. "I still find myself on guard when I'm in a crowd. That's when you had to be very careful over there."

Gibben said Kugler has developed a deeper appreciation for life and its possibilities since his return home.

"As a police officer, he always had a skeptical view of people," she said. "But now he sees people as people."

# SKIS

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and are spread across the country.

Eck attended the former Shavertown Elementary School, a wooden building at the site of the present Burger King, and played Little League baseball near a swamp behind the current Back Mountain Shopping Center.

A member of the Westmoreland High School Band, Eck played basketball, baseball and ran track and field. He also did some cross-country skiing at Conyngham Field in Trucksville and went canoeing on the Susquehanna River.

In the summers, Eck worked as the waterfront director at Camp Acahela Boy Scout Camp in Blakeslee. He also helped at the Back Mountain Memorial Library Auction because his mother was the chairperson of refreshments and his father, a banker, counted the money.

Eck was honored with the Vail Valley Foundation's 2008 Vail Valley Citizen of the Year Award on Dec. 5 at the foundation's annual Black Diamond Ball for his efforts to construct the current hospital and medical facilities in the town. He resides in Vail with his wife, Kathleen, and has two adult stepchildren, Jeni, 33, and Clark, 30.

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