



April 2020
Volume 1, Issue 1

Brothers in Arms



MAJ Eric K. King proudly served 16 years with 3 combat and 1 humanitarian support deployments.

FROM ACTIVE DUTY TO VETSWHATSNEXT

Major Eric King formed VetsWhatsNext (VWN) (501c3) in 2019 to empower and help Disabled Veterans, Homeless Veterans, Service Members, and their families. VWN provides services and resources that will allow them to reclaim their lives and economic stability after serving. These services and resources will be offered through our website, mobile app, and eventually a brick and mortar Outreach Center.

This newsletter is of the views and opinions of the collaborators of the Brother in Arms Collective and does not represent the DOD or any service component perspective.

Welcome to "Brothers in Arms" from Black Fathers, NOW!

"Brothers in Arms" is a collective community of current active duty and veteran Black Fathers from all branches of the U.S. Military. You can look forward to a Monthly "Brothers in Arms" Newsletter, a community of brothers who "Understand" your journey as a Soldier and as a Black Father, Resources explicitly tailored for you, future events, and much more...

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

VetsWhatsNext	1
Mindful of Your Awareness.....	4
Estate Planning.....	5
That Damn Sloppy Joe.....	6
Month of the Military Child	9

**THIS MONTH'S
NEWSLETTER IS
DEDICATED TO THE
MONTH OF THE
MILITARY CHILD**

FEATURED ARTICLE

VetsWhatsNext :

**Maj Eric King
(Retired)**

**MAY Topic: Investing
and Entrepreneurship**



Who is MAJ Eric King: The Veteran

Major King served four combat tours with the US Army over 16 years:

- Infantry Platoon Leader **2004 - 2005** in Iraq.
- Company Commander in combat **2007 – 2009**, Iraq.
- Sustainment Brigade Operations Officer **2013 – 2014**, Afghanistan.
- Battalion Executive Officer **2014 – 2015**, Liberia, West Africa, in support of the fight against **Ebola**.

As the acting battalion commander during his deployment to Liberia, West Africa; Major King and his battalion provided humanitarian aid and assistance to the African nation during this health crisis. MAJ King saw first hand how Ebola was ravaging the nation and region. Major King's leadership and organizational skills were essential during this global crisis.

After a distinguished and decorated career, Major King was honorably retired on June 28, 2016. He sacrificed his body for this nation sustaining multiple injuries including Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety disorders. He paid the ultimate price giving all he had to the Soldiers and community he served. VetsWhatsNext was the question he was left to answer for all those he had served with and could still help through his nonprofit organization.



His commitment to the nation and the veteran community didn't allow him to go and sit quietly while his troops continued to serve. MAJ Eric King now retired did all that he could to recover physically mentally and emotionally. VetsWhatsNext is his contribution to the Soldiers, veterans and their families still serving. Eric was recently recognized by the NAACP and will receive the President Special Achievement and Distinguished Public Service Award from the Grand Prairie NAACP.

Who Is Eric King The Father

Major King is a native of Marianna, Arkansas and is the proud father of three sons and one daughter. He loves to spend time with his family, attending church, reading, golfing, and fellowshiping with his fraternity brothers of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., traveling and attending functions as a member of the VFW and American Legion.





VetsWhatsNext: COVID-19 World Campaign

VetsWhatsNext is running its first Worldwide campaign. Over the next 90 days, all donations and sales from VWN apparel will go to The Dallas Foundation, The World Health Organization and families that are impacted by this Coronavirus crisis.

VWN COVID-19 shirts and other merchandise purchased from the online store and donations will support this drive. To support this VWN initiative and great cause, you can visit:

[https://
www.vetswhatsnext.org/
donate/](https://www.vetswhatsnext.org/donate/)
[http://vetswhatsnext.deco-
apparel.com/](http://vetswhatsnext.deco-apparel.com/)



Mindful of Your Awareness

By Coach Timothy Mclean of Mindful Self LLC

AWARENESS

As a father your time with your family should mean your awareness is tuned into their needs. Many combat veterans suffering with PTSD find that home can be the place they sleep until it's time to go to work again. Your mindful awareness is key to connecting with them.

Coach Tim McLean is a certified life coach that utilizes his gift to help active duty, civilians and veterans to see life through a different lens. His techniques are more than useful. His seminars enrich the lives of others to take their mask off first to be more genuine and learn to put your mask on first so you can help other more efficiently.

As you go about your day, do you often think about your life/work balance? How often do these moments of mindfulness and reflection occur? Two big questions to ask, right?

The key to becoming more mindful and balanced in our life's journey is to assess our past, present, and set goals for our future. We do not need to know the entire playbook. The who, what, when, where, why, and how of our mindset will change to become the improved you.

You just need to sincerely believe your new thought process (mindfulness) will change everything in your world. To simplify this concept, what is the difference when you flip a light switch on in the middle of the night? The light brings awareness, clearer vision, and the ability to distinguish obstacles more naturally to identify security more definitively. Your mindfulness is your light switch to everything.

Will your transformation occur overnight? No, and nor will it be easy, but your new positive mindset possesses all the needed tools already. The key is to take the first of many steps towards putting yourself first, knowing others will benefit greatly from your fresh Mindful Self!



Estate Planning as a Tool for Wealth Management

Estate planning isn't just about death, it's about life. It's about making decisions ahead of time. Thus, Estate planning is more about creating a strategic plan than just the final disposition of your assets. Estate planning can be a difficult topic to approach because it forces you to face your own mortality. We don't want to admit the chinks in our armor, nor do we want to face the fact that life can deal with unexpected blows that can take away our ability to speak for ourselves and voice our own choices. Estate planning is a tool that provides a solution to this problem.

At a minimum, your estate plan answers the following questions: 1) Who will inherit my property when I pass on? 2) Who will speak for me if I can't speak for myself? 3) How will my family's wealth be affected by I die or become incapacitated? Each of these topics can take up hundreds of pages to adequately address the issue. As such, you should seek competent legal help from qualified professionals when making decisions about your estate plan.

Many people overlook incapacity in their estate planning – assuming that it only happens to other people. The reality is that unexpected things happen, and the results can be devastating. While nothing can eliminate the pain of having to deal with the incapacity of a loved one, properly drafted estate documents can help ensure that your chosen advocate will have the power to handle your affairs.

Consider the following example. A young soldier is stationed at a domestic base. He goes to work and comes home to his wife and young child daily. He works with computers, and thoughts of war barely cross his mind. He and his wife have just signed a contract to purchase their first home and a scheduled to go to closing in a few weeks. Unfortunately, he goes to work one day and becomes a victim in a base shooting rampage. He survives the shooting but is now in a coma – alive but unable to communicate. This young soldier had a power of attorney drafted before his last deployment. He even had a will and an advanced medical directive. Unfortunately, the will only provide for his wishes after his death, a power of attorney was for a limited time and has expired, and his medical directive just left the decisions to his wife and didn't express his wishes.

Most people would think this isn't a big deal. After all, his wife has the right to speak for him, right? Not so fast, laws vary from state to state, and things get even more complicated when it becomes necessary to deal with veteran's benefits. As it turns out, once the power of attorney expired, his wife was no longer able to sign for him during his incapacity. As a result, the closing was canceled, and they lost the house, leaving his wife and child searching for a place to live at a time when they really wanted to be focused on his care. Because his medical directive left all the decisions to his wife, she was paralyzed with doubt and struggled daily with the question of what he really wanted.

Finally, because he was still alive, assets that were solely in his name were not available to his wife. That meant that his wife didn't have access to his paycheck or his separate bank account to pay the bills, and that created a financial struggle. His wife had to hire an attorney and petition the court to get the right to manage his affairs. The court demanded to review all of his medical and financial information and appointed a guardian ad litem to ensure that he wasn't being taken advantage of. This process was an additional financial strain and was an unnecessary drain on the family's budding wealth.



Michael L. Daniels is a Virginia attorney with a demonstrated history of working in Technology, Business, and Law. He is skilled in Taxation, Corporate Law, and Advocacy. He is a graduate of Georgetown University Law Center and holds

Every soldier will become a veteran and eventually death will visit us all. Estate Planning will be the force multiplier for service member families to prepare for a better future. A service members best days will also include risks that could change their children's lives forever. Michael Daniels provides a framework that fortifies all reasons one should consult a reliable lawyer in your local area for advice or advocacy.

That Damn Sloppy Joe

By Chef Alton Greene

As a chef, Army Veteran, and Father, you will always remember your very first failure. Unfortunately for me, I had my first cooking failure in front of my uncensored family. It was over some damn Sloppy Joe. They would ride that wave for at least 3 years because somebody is always bringing it up every time. This story is to share with families that want to teach fathers or children how to cook something simple, delicious, and memorable.

I was 18 years old when I went to the military. Growing up, I never had to go without eating, no matter where I would be, even if it was either at our house, over my granny house, or over any of my other kinfolks house, there was always an abundance of food to eat. The job I wanted to do was be a cook because, in my mind, I wanted to make sure I was going to eat with no problem. This was one of the many reasons I wanted to become a cook in the Army.

In our family, regardless of which side of the family it was, my momma's or daddy's it was a win, win for us kids. That taught me growing up, food was the common denominator in getting family together. I can't speak for how other families get their families together, but my family, when they cook, the only problem would be if you have enough, and I have never seen us run out of food, never.

During those epic family gatherings, I would always sneak and observe when any of the women in the kitchen doing their thing, getting it in and was smooth about it. Just looking at my granny Leara Pearl, my auntie Louise, or even my auntie Sweetie, it was a sight to see. But the one big thing that really influenced me to become a cook was actually my father. Yes, my Momma did a lot of the cooking in the house, but once her schedule at the post office got a lot demanding, and she rested during the day, my daddy really took it to another level. Just the fact that he did the bulk of the cooking, everybody in the house happy to include my Momma.

It was the way my daddy made my momma smile is what took being a cook over the top. I wanted not only folks getting that smile on people's faces, but I wanted that joy of accomplishment that I brought not just a smile but a memory. To make a long story short, I go to the Army, do basic training, then go to cook school. Learning how to cook many different types of foods, including foods that I let lone ever heard of, but not eaten before. It was all new to me.

As a cook, you come across that one food item, you learn how to do, and you just love it when it comes around again for you to cook it. That dish for me was good ol' sloppy joe. Yelp, I said it, Sloppy Joe. Back when I joined the Army, back then, everything was made from scratch, so that really worked out for me, because again a lot of this was really new to me. Now keep in mind, when you're cooking something using an army recipe, it's either broken down into either 50 or 100 servings, so you really got to know how to break it down when you have different amounts to fix.

Once I graduated from cook's training, I'm going back home to Detroit for about two weeks, and let me tell you, I had in my mind, I'm about to get it in with this sloppy joe, bout' to make my mark with my people with this sloppy joe. Well, quickly did I learn, what you think you want to do without making a plan, will severely go wrong. I'm going to let you know ahead of time, so it won't be a surprise. They roasted me. It was a big fail, and I had all the above feelings going on. I was dizzy, queasy, felt like I had a hangover, and I didn't even drink at the time, and everything was spinning. I just wanted to go run and hide under somebody's rock.

People were coming out of nowhere coming into the kitchen. Brothers, cousins, friends, and my Momma. Everybody had a comment, and they weren't good ones.

Why is it watery?

Where the onions at?

What's that smell?

Out of all that complaining, once my Momma got to talking, it got real quiet. I will never forget the words that came out of her mouth, to cause a scary silence throughout the house. The words that she said out very loud and with authority was, **"I know you didn't cook all my ground beef I had up in here?"** All I could do at that moment was give my Momma that deer looking at headlights coming at him. Here I am, 18 years old, standing in front of my Momma, and feeling like a 2nd grader that got caught with his dirty hands in the cookie jar.

The next words that came out of her mouth, **"Don't let me repeat myself!!"** That kitchen got so empty so fast, I felt like I was on an island with a 4 foot 3 rottweiler weighing every bit 135 lbs. The only thing that can come out my mouth is, "I don't know?" If I had yelled, "I did," and the look she gave me, made me break down before she ever hit me.

Needless to say, she didn't smack me, but the way she spoke to me put the fear of God in me still. After she told me a few other words, I knew I had to replace that meat. She tasted that Sloppy Joe. She took one taste, looked at me, looked at the sloppy joe, then looked back at me, and said, "The Army taught you how to cook like this. You need to give them their money back because I don't know what this is you made." Then she walked out the house screaming at my daddy, saying that he needed to get in the kitchen and help your non-cooking son get it right.

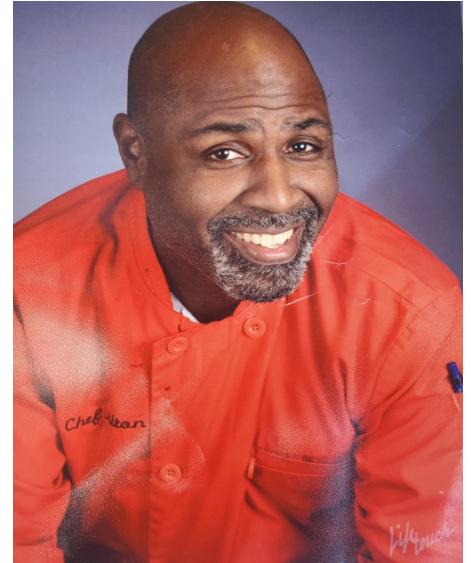
I tell you, it seems like it was just a few weeks ago, my Momma said to me that. Yes, I had to be the butt of many jokes about Sloppy Joe for years, but I didn't let that deter me from doing what I really wanted to do, and that was a cook. I could have allowed all the crazy jokes from my brothers and cousins to make me turn away, or even when my Momma broke me down, but it didn't. I really made me thick-skinned because you know as well as I know, the family doesn't hold back when it comes to family.

All in all, it's nothing but love. That was over 36 years ago, and looking back at what I call "That Damn Sloppy Joe," I didn't let that one moment define who or what I was going to be. It truly made me what I am today as a Chef, it taught me how to not only preserve, but it also taught me that I'm going to get hit in the mouth many times, I just got to take those punches, and keep going ahead. Today, whenever I go home to visit family, the conversation is totally different now. Know the discussion is "when you going to hook us up with some of that cooking, you know you be putting it down," and my reply is, "I got y'all, let me hook y'all up with some damn sloppy joe," and everybody just starts laughing.

Recipe: That Damn Sloppy Joe

Sloppy Joe (the Right Way)

3 pounds ground beef/ground turkey
1 large green and red bell pepper, diced
1/2 large onion, diced
1 1/2 cups ketchup
1/2 cup BBQ sauce
5 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1/2 cup packed brown sugar
2 teaspoons chili powder, or more as needed
1 teaspoon mustard
Any type of bun/bread
2 tablespoons of butter



Start browning the ground beef in a large pot over medium-high heat. Drain off all the fat.

Add in the green and red peppers and onions. Stir, and then add the ketchup and garlic. Stir it around to combine, and then add the brown sugar, chili powder, mustard, and BBQ sauce, Worcestershire, salt and pepper to taste. Stir to combine, and then cover and simmer over medium-low heat, about 20 minutes

To serve, spread bun/bread with butter, and brown in skillet or griddle. Once golden on one side, spoon a good amount of the meat mixture onto the bun/bread and then top with the other half. Serve with chips, salad, or just enjoy it by itself.

Chef Alton Greene spent 24 years in the Army feeding Soldiers. His passion lives on in his community service efforts not only as a chef. He's a certified AAU track coach as well. For years he has fed the minds, bodies and spirits of everyone he's been blessed to meet. I can attest to having had the opportunity to see him coach champions, taste food and feed the hungry. He can teach, motivate and inspire others to do more than they ever thought imaginable. He is a certified savant in both arenas. We thank him for his contribution and service.

BROTHERS IN ARMS

Brothers in Arms is monthly newsletter produced by African American active duty, veterans, and military spouses that are dedicated fathers.

Brothers in Arms is a subgroup of Black Fathers Now. We collectively provide services to communities, churches and organization on various topics.

We can be contacted at
4Brothersinarms2020@gmail.com.

April: Month of the Military Child

By LTC Michael Sturdivant

First and foremost thank you for reading this month's edition of Brothers In Arms (B.I.A). April is recognized as Month of the Military Child. The family is the cornerstone of the military component. Every Soldier was once a child, and many Soldiers have children.

This newsletter is a contribution from black men who are doting fathers that volunteered to serve the most powerful military on earth. I pray the articles and content will provide a glimpse into the lives and attributes of each member of B.I.A. Each article is written from the scope and narrative that there are great fathers that serve their communities. The most impactful and passionate reason we share in common is that we do it all for our children to see that their lives, and our legacy meant more than just being a Soldier in the service.

Those children are the benefactors of opportunities to travel with their parents to new duty stations every couple of years. As a military child myself, you always felt both as a guest initially but welcomed by the community you become a member. The best part was still making new friends while the saddest part was having to leave those friends, rela-

tionships, and communities.

It did not dawn on me how those times would affect me until I became a parent. When It was hard for all of us. As a Soldier, I couldn't tell them when I would return or if I would return. Every day was so new being deployed, and knowing they worried as much as I worried about them, it was quite frankly hell. My wife did a phenomenal duty and service in keeping our family together. She did all the heavy lifting.

The family is the combat multiplier that ensures the Soldier can focus on his job, duty, and passion. The family gets no vote when it's time for that service member to deploy or heaven forbid is injured or killed in combat. The military is, by far, one of the most resilient beings ever created by God. The most hardened Soldier will melt from a hug from their daughter or a high five from their son. Our children didn't chose this life we did and it effects the relationships they have in the future. Prayerfully this newsletter will give them some insight to our talents and passions. We never gave up on our and would not want them to give up on theirs.

