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In the hot seat: Walter Campbell

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Published 2:15 am PDT

Friday, June 17, 2005

Story appeared in Scene
section, Page E3

Walter Campbell has discovered that comedy and the armed forces do mix.

Since the Sacramento native joined the Air Force 11 years ago, his talent for making people laugh has blossomed into a part-time career as a stand-up comic traveling the military circuit.



Walter Campbell says "there's nothing like the rush of adrenaline" from being on stage.

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Campbell, 31, who has opened for Sinbad, will bring his jokes to Travis Air Force Base tonight as part of its Juneteenth celebrations.

We caught up with the staff sergeant recently by phone, where he was speaking from Lackland Air Force Base in Texas.

Q: When did you discover that you were funnier than the average person?

A: In kindergarten at Tahoe Elementary School, my teacher would give me the last five minutes of class to do Yogi Bear and Boo Boo. In middle school, I was always performing - break-dancing or doing lip sync.

Q: Who was your favorite person to lip sync?

A: I loved to lip sync crazy, smoked-out Bobby Brown.

Q: What's it like being on stage?

A: There's nothing like the rush of adrenaline. What really makes me feel good is coming up with a concept joke and the audience thinks it's as funny as I do.

Q: There are a lot of comedians these days who are pretty risqué and sexually explicit. Are you?

A: No, I'm a clean comedian. I think it's a testament to my skills that people say that they laugh the whole time before realizing that I never curse.

Q: Never?

A: Well ... I used to curse, but when you are in the military, you are representing the armed forces 24/7.

Q: How did you end up in the military and doing comedy?

A: I attended junior college and realized that most of my friends (and I) were stagnant. ... We were spending more time playing dominoes in the student common than in class; I was sitting there cracking jokes. I knew I needed to get serious.

I saw an ad for the Air Force that said, "Aim High." Being dyslexic, I thought it said, "I am high." So I thought, "That's where I need to be!"

Q: What happened after you enlisted?

A: Well, they stationed me at an Air Force base in the middle of nowhere in New Mexico. I lied and told a promoter that I had been a big comedian in L.A. He put me on a gong show and I won. He booked me as a host for his other shows, and soon I was working with BET comedians and opening for big artists in shows in Texas. As a member of the Air Force's Tops in Blue traveling entertainment group, I traveled the world doing comedy.

Q: Do you plan to leave the military to become a full-time comedian?

A: Ain't no medical benefits in comedy.

About the writer:

- Reach Fahizah Alim at falim@sacbee.com To read more about Campbell, go to www.str8silly.com




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