

Flying at 4 inches



Above, Patrick Griffin displays the form that lets him go in excess of 80 mph. It's a 5-year-old skateboard and a Honda Civic that keeps Griffin, left, rolling in record form.

Photography: G.S. Peters

By G.S. PETERS
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Going out for an afternoon of rest and relaxation with Patrick Griffin is not your typical day of fun and frolic. In fact, a jaunt with the private, first class, from Fort Riley on a sunny day is more like filming a segment of the popular ABC-TV program, "That's Incredible."

The 20-year-old New Jersey native's idea of having fun is lying prone on his back, atop a 28-inch long skateboard, while being towed more than 80 mph by friends in his Honda Civic.

"Going 80 mph is a natural high," Griffin said. "The only thing I can compare it to is surfin' down the face of a wave."

"It's a release. You don't think of anything else. When you're in the service, like we are, there aren't many things you can do to forget about everything."

On most clear days, Griffin and fellow members of C Company, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division (Mech), Leon McClarren and Stephen Ward, can be found on the stretch of blacktop between Marshall Air Field and Interstate 70, near the Junction City Raceway.

The trio of soldiers have been participating in the dangerous sport for about three months. What makes Griffin different from his friends is that he is a record holder — at least, a record holder, of sorts.

While reading through a recent edition of "The Guinness Book of World Records," he discovered that the speed record for riding a skateboard was 71.79 mph. If, indeed, his record can be substantiated, he would well surpass the old mark.

"I'd like to start doing it for charity," Griffin said. "I'd like to work with some charity and have people pledge like a dollar for each mile an hour."

Griffin's skateboarding history began approximately eight years ago, when he got his first board. The idea to be towed came only recently, however. He got the notion when he saw the Dogtown Skaters from California. It was immediate inspiration.

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