



## Dustin Hill gets Purple Heart

*By Barb Kromphardt BCR Staff*

SAN ANTONIO, Texas -- Spc. Dustin Hill of Wyandot received the thanks of his nation on Jan. 14, when he was presented with the Purple Heart for wounds he received in the war in Iraq.

Gen. Richard Cody presented the Purple Heart to Hill at the Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, where Hill has been recovering from injuries he received in a car bombing Sept. 21 while serving with the Galva National Guard unit in Iraq.

Hill, who was the gunner in the vehicle at the time of the attack, suffered the loss of one eye and third-degree burns over about 33 percent of his body. So far, he has had his right hand, about three inches of his right arm and all of the fingers and thumb of his left hand amputated.

Liz Kelm, Hill's mother, said the ceremony was very touching and well-deserved.

"There were rumors of President Bush being here for the Purple Heart ceremony," she said. "But it must have had been just that -- a rumor."

Kelm said the biggest change for her and her son is that Hill is now allowed to stay with her instead of in the hospital. She has been temporarily living on post, so she could visit and take care of him every day.

"This was a long time coming, and we are so happy we have finally reached this point," she said.

Kelm, like many mothers and wives, spends hours a day in the hospital, and she has chosen to become involved with her son's care. Even though Hill no longer has to stay in the hospital, they still spend the biggest part of the day there, working on physical therapy and therapy on his prosthesis.

Kelm and Hill have a lot of company in Texas. As the Army's premier medical facility, BAMC is treating more than 280 injured and burned soldiers from Iraq. The most recent patients include those injured in the suicide attack on the mess tent in Mosul.

With advances in battlefield medicine and personnel, 89 percent of all casualties in Iraq are coming home, according to Col. Richard Agee, chief of staff at the Medical Center and School.

For Kelm, things are going well.

"Our days continue to be very busy, but at least our evenings belong to us," she said. "We can do whatever we like to do."

If anyone would like to send a card or note to Hill or his mother, they may do so at the following address: BAMC Mailroom, Dustin Hill /Elizabeth Kelm, 3851 Roger Brooke Drive, San Antonio, Texas 78234



Dustin Hill (second from right) receives a steadying hand from his physical therapist Mario Gonzalez (right) while being awarded the Purple Heart on Jan. 14 from Sgt. Major of the Army Kenneth Preston (left) and Gen. Richard Cody. (Photo contributed)