

## Wyagnet soldier on the mend in Texas

*By Barb Kromphardt BCR Staff*

WYANET -- A Wyagnet resident is looking at spending the next year in the hospital because of injuries he received while fighting in Iraq.

Spc. Dustin Hill, a member of the National Guard unit in Galva, was seriously injured in a car bombing Sept. 21 in Iraq. The incident involved members of Fox Company/202 Air Defense Artillery soldiers.

Hill, who was the gunner in the vehicle at the time of the attack, suffered the most serious injuries, including the loss of one eye and third-degree burns over about 33 percent of his body.

Hill was transported to Germany before being sent to the Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas.

According to an e-mail recently sent by Maj. Michael Kessel, the company commander, Hill has had four operations thus far, three skin grafts and one to stabilize his femur and ankle, which were broken when he was blown out of the vehicle.

Kessel wrote that, according to Hill's mother, Liz Kelm, this week Hill will undergo skin grafting on his head and face.

In addition to the loss of his right eye, Hill has subsequently had his right hand, about three inches of his right arm and all of the fingers and thumb of his left hand amputated. He may also lose his right ear, but the doctors have begun the procedure to replace it with a prosthetic ear, molded from his brother's ear. At some point in the future, he will be fitted for a prosthetic eye and hand. The fingers on his left hand will probably be replaced by using his toes.

Hill is still in the ICU at BAMC and according to his mother, will remain in the hospital for about one year or so. He has woken up recently but is still heavily sedated.

Kessel said Kelm and other family members have been near Hill since his arrival back in the United States, and the family is grateful for all of the prayers and thoughts of the community during this difficult time.

If anyone would like to send a card or note to Hill or his mother, Kessel wrote they may do so at the following address: BAMC Mailroom, ATTN: Spc. Dustin Hill, 3851 Roger Brooke Drive, Dept. 1000, Ft. Sam, Houston, TX 78234-6200, Ward 4 South.

According to Kessel, the rest of the unit has continued with the mission, and while emotionally difficult at times, has done so successfully. There have been no incidents within the battery since the Sept. 21 car bombing. Kessel said Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the top Al-Qaida figure believed to be in Iraq, has taken responsibility for ordering the car bombing.

Other Galva unit members injured in the attack were Ssg. Daniel Quimby of Henry, who sustained minor burns while working on Hill; Spc. Lucas Siemers of Galva, who sustained shrapnel wounds and a dislocated elbow; Ssg. David Jensen of Albany, who

suffered a shrapnel wound to the thigh; and Sgt. Marc Stach of Dixon, who had a piece of shrapnel burn through his uniform jacket above his elbow and slightly bruise his arm. The other four men have all returned to duty.

### **Residents oppose dirt bike/ATV track**

MINERAL -- Duane Wirth and his neighbors in Mineral Township are battling over the future of the township.

### **County still looking at administrator**

PRINCETON -- A municipal government expert spoke to the Bureau County Board on the issue of hiring a county administrator.

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### **Haunted School ready for some screams**

LAMOILLE -- This year LaMoille High School students are resuming a hallowed tradition -- namely, scaring the socks off everyone in the community.

### **Walnut continues with water plant problems**

WALNUT -- Delays continue at the problem-plagued water treatment plant project in Walnut. At Monday's Walnut Village Board meeting, the board learned more problems have surfaced, causing yet another delay in the project.

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