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Galva Guardsman wounded twice in Iraq

Wednesday, January 26, 2005

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BY CATHERINE THADEN

OF THE JOURNAL STAR

GALVA - Staff Sgt. Derrick E.

Glisan was shot in the calf Jan. 18 when his unit was fired upon by insurgents, but it's not the first Purple Heart the Henry County resident has earned - it's his second in as many months.

Maj. Michael W. Kessel of the Galva National Guard explained in an e-mail to Glisan's family that Glisan was on patrol about 20 miles from Baghdad when the truck he was driving was ambushed with machine gunfire.

"Two rounds made it through the engine compartment, and one hit SSG Derrick Glisan in the left calf," Kessel wrote. "The bullet went clean through his leg without damaging any bones. He has already been released and is back with us. He is currently recuperating in his room with everyone keeping a check on him, but his spirits are very good."

And the uplifting spirit that Glisan, 27, possesses is one that his parents, Cheryl and Wayne, said will keep him going until he returns to the United States, hopefully around Easter.

"He has never been one to complain," Cheryl said. As a child, Derrick walked around with a broken collar bone for three days before realizing there may be something wrong when he couldn't move his arm.

"He's a good, strong kid. And he thinks he should be back out with the guys patrolling the area. I personally wish he would wait until after the elections to return to the action," she said.

Kessel echoed Cheryl's words, saying that Derrick is "a tough young man and a great soldier. He will be fine."

No other soldiers from the group were injured, Kessel wrote, "although two vehicles were heavily damaged."

The injury was the second of two that Glisan suffered within the last two months, Wayne Glisan said.

"The first injury happened just before Christmas. The guys were out on patrol, and a car bomb went off near them," Wayne said.

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Glisan suffered minor cuts from flying glass. He originally didn't tell his parents about the injury, nor did he tell his two young daughters Alexandria, 6, and Arika, 4, whom his sister and her husband are raising for now.

"We heard about the injury from the U.S. government," Wayne said. "They informed us, not Derrick. When I found out about it, I got on the computer and sent him a message to never do that again! He'd better tell us when he gets hurt."

Wayne said Derrick got on a Web cam and showed his parents and his children that his initial injuries were negligible. But it didn't calm his mother's fears.

"After the first time he got hurt, you just start praying a lot," Cheryl said. "But this last time was a lot scarier."

Wayne, a Vietnam veteran, said that when he was in the service, three Purple Hearts was a soldier's ticket home, but he didn't know if that protocol was still active.

"I certainly don't want him to get hurt again - I just want him home soon. We've got 5 acres of land just outside of town, and when he returns, we've got one big party planned for him," Wayne said.

Derrick, who has been in the Middle East since October 2003 and stationed near Baghdad since March 2004, has been a Guardsman for nearly a decade, Cheryl said.

"I never dreamed that he would be called up for duty," she said.

Derrick's aunt, Donna Wallentine, said although Derrick signed up for the National Guard to get college funding, he knew the possibility of serving his country in wartime was real.

"He's the type of guy that is a natural-born leader. He's going to be just fine over there. He's not going to make anyone do something that he won't do himself. He's always been like that. Look, right or wrong, our boys are over there, so now is the time to stand behind them."

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