



Galva guardsman next Bill Mauldin?

By Star Courier staff

CAMP COOK, TAJI, IRAQ -- A Galva National Guardsman may be the next Bill Mauldin, whose cartoons of the everyday lives of the GIS in World War II won him a Pulitzer Prize.

Dan Brokaw, a sergeant from Sterling deployed in Iraq with the 120 members of Foxtrot Battery, 202nd Air Defense Artillery, from Galva, has been drawing humorous panels of what's happening in the lives of his fellow soldiers and they've become popular among the troops.

Brokaw, who is employed at the ACE Hardware warehouse in Princeton, was finishing his final two classes needed to complete a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Design at Northern Illinois University in October of 2003 when his unit was called up. The unit arrived in Iraq in March after a short stay in Kuwait.

In April the unit took over a new area of operations and started patrolling.

"A week after taking control we were baptized by fire in what came to be known as 'The Battle of Holy Week,' said Brokaw, who is married and has a young daughter. The Galva unit was ambushed multiple times and involved in several large firefights. "My platoon alone expended over 30,000 rounds of ammunition over the course of three days of fighting," said Brokaw. "Combat is a dirty, awful thing that is not glamorous and left me with a pit of questions and emotions. My emotions and questions needed an outlet. I started to draw."

Brokaw said he started to draw anything that came into his head. "I drew sheep, I drew Iraqis, I drew my daughter. I drew quietly and, for the most part, privately. Most of my drawings were simple, sketch level drawings, as time and material limitations dictated. I thought I was drawing for the hell of it. I see that it was more like self-therapy." Brokaw said his drawings began to take on more life and more meaning.

"I was reading on the internet one day about an insurgent who said something along the lines of 'I will keep fighting until the Americans leave.' I vividly remember thinking 'Hey moron, if you'd quit fighting, maybe they'll let me leave.' I started drawing about how ironic I found that statement to be and hence, my cartoon series 'Outside the Wire' was born. The expression "outside the wire" is what the troops call being outside of the relative safety of base camp.

The cartoon was published with little fanfare in the unit newsletter. "I figured my cartoons would go largely unnoticed," said Brokaw. "Then guys started to come up to me and say things like 'That was great buddy,' or 'Isn't that the truth man.' Then, they almost always added, 'Ya know what you should do one on...?' It was somewhat flattering but more importantly, the cartoons were getting noticed. I loved the fact that my buddies felt a sense of ownership. It is, after all, based on all of our experiences. If anyone deserves a voice, it's these guys."

Brokaw said the unit has had anything that can be shot, detonated, launched, or thrown, sent their way. "We are affected directly by political decisions and are always in the middle of public debate. The Army itself is a wealth of comedic material."

In a letter posted on the Galva/Kewanee Army Page website, Brokaw apologized that many of the cartoons may seem a bit inside or jaded, "but I think I've earned the right to portray things the way I do. Most of the cartoons were just intended to make my buddies chuckle and I never thought the 'real' world would ever see them. Regardless, I hope this is an interesting glimpse into my world outside the wire."

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Incidents

[Galva woman treated after accident](#)

GALVA -- A rural Galva woman was injured Wednesday night and remains in a Peoria hospital after a single-car accident north of Galva.

[Stark County blotter](#)

Tickets

[Galva council hears about ethanol plans](#)

GALVA -- The Galva City Council heard an update at its meeting this week from members of the steering committee of the proposed ethanol plant for Henry County.

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