

# *Postcards from Iraq*

## **My Out of The Box Experience**

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I was excited to come over to Iraq in April 2006. It actually took me quite few months to decide if this was indeed what I wanted to do. Since I only have less than five years left to retire from the federal government civil service, I thought “what a positive way to end my career”. So when this opportunity came up I embraced the idea and knew that this was the opportunity I had been waiting for.

One morning during breakfast my twenty year old son and I sat at the kitchen table discussing my departure. He was not very happy about my decision and he was quick to express his concerns, but in the same breath he told me that he was looking at me in a different light and he heard the excitement in my voice and he knew that this was something I had to do for myself. And after a two hour conversation my son looked me straight in the eyes, with a look of love that only a mother knows, and said “Mom you’ve always been there for me and now I want to be there for you” and gave me his support wholeheartedly. I remember the feeling I got when I

arrived in Kuwait and noticed a sea of white robes on all the men. I looked around me and thought “Oh no, I am in a foreign country, a REAL foreign country”. From that moment on I knew my mind set needed to shift immediately to the task at hand.

Once I began working I realized that my job in personnel was an integral part of the success of the Corps mission. At this point it became clear to me that I was a small piece of the big puzzle that made everything else fall into place to accomplish the task at hand which was helping the Iraqi people in rebuilding their country. And speaking of the Iraqi people, my encounters with them were all positive. On a daily basis I interacted with our Iraqi maintenance crew even learned a few Arabic phrases and on a few occasions I was fortunate enough to have a conversation (through a translator) with an Iraqi General and an Iraqi Sheik. But overall the highlight of my tour was the rewarding experience of a job well done and the knowledge of being a part of the historic rebuilding of Iraq.

I returned back home in November 2006 and for 2 ½ months I enjoyed my family, the luxury of long hot showers, a comfortable bed and all of my favorite foods. Then I received a call asking me to consider returning for another six month tour. Once again I nervously sat down with my family to get their permission but this time around it was easier. In late January 2007, I found myself back in a Kevlar helmet and body armor vest in Iraq. Call me crazy for returning, but once again I will have the opportunity to continue serving the Corps and also creating special memories with the Iraqi people that I have come to know as friends. The Corps motto, ESSAYONS, means LET US TRY and for all of us Corps employees that are supporting this mission it is a phrase we embrace. Essayons!



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