

# Postcards from Iraq

## Adios, Mi Amigos

by Tommy Clarkson  
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**T**o family & friends:  
No, our trip to Iraq was not fun filled nor did we, at any time, during this action packed adventure, ever “wish you were here!”

But then, again, neither was an objective when embarking on this experience which, for us collectively, was nearly thirty-three months! But rest assured, the souls and psyches of Tommy and Patty are now indelibly imprinted with a myriad of memories of people and events from this country situated between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

My work has taken me throughout this ancient land. That which I've experienced has been, often, emotion evoking and life impacting: Standing atop the nearly 4,000 year old Ziggurat of Ur, near the birthplace of Abraham, following a visit to a new, nearby courthouse; Walking in snow half way up my calves to participate in celebratory ceremonies by local villagers upon the completion of a compact unit that would provide them with their first clean and potable water; Peering out second level, border fort, gun ports at the bleak and barren expanse of a neighboring country led by individuals with questionable attitudes about the new democracy of Iraq; And, visits to renovated schools crowded with eager eyed children who are the - oh so critical - future for this troubled country.

We've seen hundreds upon hundreds of Soldiers and Civilians arrive with an amalgam of enthusiasm and trepidation, labor long and leave tired. We've seen the well intended strive and falter, the experienced stumble and learn, and the grizzled and emotionally gnarled brought to tears by the inane senselessness of death and destruction wrought upon innocents through asymmetric terrorism.

Some evenings, after retiring to our 8'x40' shipping container home - *Casita Conex* - we would, almost desperately, draw from each other's strength trying to understand to complexity of this mission and its importance upon the world whole. We would often jointly struggle with incomprehension of how fellow travelers of humanity could inflict such horrors on others. Further, our minds fairly reeled at comments we saw and heard via the U.S. and Western media who appeared to not understand the extent of evil that, in fact, exists and how eager it is driven to impose itself on all not of its own ilk.

Though our work is far from finished we are now ready to leave. We have both striven to do our best and can leave with heads held high but, in turn, with the heaviest of hearts for our Iraqi “sons” and “daughters” left behind. It is they to whom we owe the most. It is they who daily face dangers wholly unimaginable to any who live in the perceived security of the U.S. that we will miss the most.

To all we have met, worked with and enjoyed comradeship, we wish the very best. Thank you for being a part of this difficult undertaking. We are proud to have served with you.

Tom & Patty Clarkson

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Tommy and Patty Clarkson—2006.