

Postcards from Iraq

Supporting the Mission

**Gene Embry, Chief, Resource Management
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I have had a desire to serve in Iraq since I first heard about the focus of the Corps' mission. I started inquiring about positions in the fall of 2003 and volunteered. But to my surprise, the position I applied for was not in Iraq but in Dallas in support of Restore Iraqi Oil (RIO). I spent four months in Dallas from November 2003– April 2004 supporting the RIO mission as an Accountant. Keeping track of funding, paying contractor invoices, and doing whatever was necessary, I helped to keep the mission going. It was a great experience and as a result I ended up getting a permanent position in Dallas with the Corps of Engineers' Southwestern Division. After moving to Dallas, I continued working RIO but in the back of my mind there was always the desire to support the mission while working in Iraq.

In January 2007 I finally made it to the Gulf Region Division in Baghdad's International Zone (IZ) to work as the Team Leader in Finance Branch of the Resource Management Office. I was surprised by the volume of work we had to accomplish with so few people. The work kept us very busy and the fact that we worked seven days a week caused us to lose track of time. It may be hard to adjust to the slower pace at home after being over here. I have had many memorable moments while in the IZ, 5K fun runs every month, eating at the palace on Sunday nights, the bazaar every Friday, and my favorite - the half-day off every Friday. I worked in the IZ from 21 Jan 2007 to 9 June 2007.

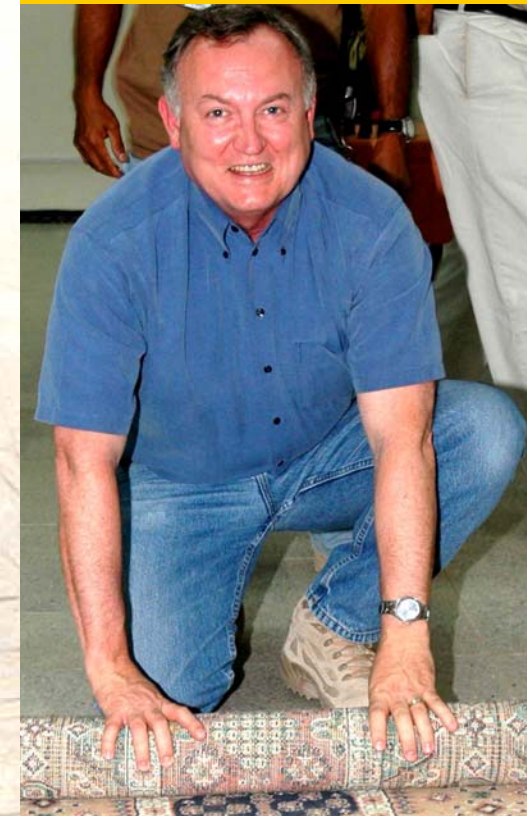
Janet and Gene Embry display some of their treasures.



On 10 June 2007 I started my new job on Victory base complex at GRC as the Resource Management (RM) Chief which brought new and exciting challenges and responsibilities. My new responsibilities included supervising six employees, preparing budgets, giving financial advice to the district, and ensuring that we managed our finances properly, to mention a few things. Work has kept me very busy and sometimes it seemed overwhelming but I have learned so many things this year and will cherish the memories. On holidays or when we had time off, a group of us from RM would visit the Haji shops on base. If we had the whole day off, we would stop at every BX and Haji shops on this compound. It's really hard to imagine me spending a whole day shopping. Before coming over here, you could not have paid me enough to go shopping all day with a bunch of women unless we were going to Costco or Lowe's. I have truly enjoyed the experience and would do it all over again. I have been introduced to and worked with some very remarkable people while in country. It's these people that I will miss most of all.



Gene shops for rugs!



MNF-I Commander, General David Petraeus, greets Gene Embry.

