

Postcards from Iraq

Making the world a safer place

By Joseph C. Rath

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I volunteered to deploy to Iraq because I wanted to be part of this historic undertaking ... rebuilding a country. Curiosity was my biggest motivator. I wanted to see what was going on here for myself and help with the effort in any way I could. My boss, a Navy Commander, was here last year and encouraged me to apply. He said the hours would be long, I'd meet some terrific people, and the rewards would be many. He was right.

I've been in Iraq almost two months and have worked with a variety of nationalities. They each come from a unique culture and background. But it's clear to me that people have basically the same needs worldwide ... a desire for meaningful work, providing a decent standard of living for their families, respect, dignity, living life to the fullest, and enjoying laughter.

My Iraqi counterparts come to work motivated with those goals. I admire their courage and conviction to make Baghdad a better place for their children and grandchildren. They each voice pride in their country and believe we're making a difference.

As an engineer tech, I'm overseeing projects on Camp Victory near the Baghdad International Airport. I'm learning new processes in construction, contracting and accountability. Most importantly I'm discovering that patience and persistence are two critical traits that help get things accomplished.

I encourage you to consider duty in Iraq. I'm glad I came. Of my 23 years government service, this is definitely one of the more interesting and challenging assignments I've had. I'm confident our efforts are making the world a safer place to live.

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