

Postcards from Iraq

Three remarkable memories from Iraq

By Jose Curet
Guaynabo, Puerto Rico

You can't get this kind of experience anywhere else — overseeing a variety of construction projects including the installation of new sewer, water and electrical networks in east Baghdad. Families and neighborhoods in east Baghdad are very appreciative of our efforts. I've seen children dancing in the street celebrating the completion of their community's first ever new sewer as ponds of smelly raw sewage was replaced by a functioning collection system.

As an electrical engineer, I'm most proud of two 132kV substations we're building to help townspeople in Sadr City – a \$50 million investment. It will definitely improve their quality of life as we upgrade the electric grid in that area.

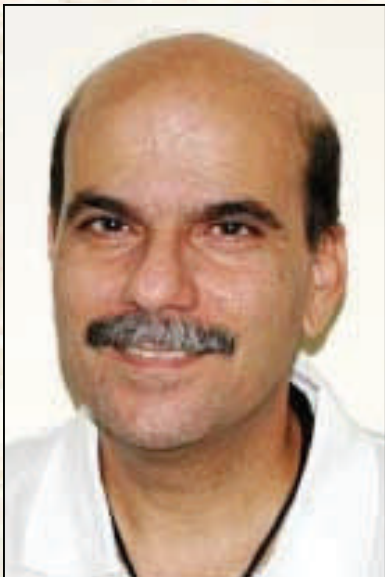
What's really special about my journey is the opportunity to interact with everyday Iraqis. They grew up under a dictator and are trying to understand what freedom is all about.

Three remarkable memories stand out during my tour.

(1) At Winchester, while awaiting the van to airport to begin my journey to Iraq, I was talking to my wife on the phone, she was in tears about the unknown dangers that awaited me and I realized those of us on the front lines aren't the only ones paying a prize – it's also the loved ones we leave behind.

(2) Our Forward Operating Base was regularly hit by mortars and on Dec. 21 one struck our compound severely injuring a fellow office worker. Fortunately, U.S. doctors were able to save her life.

(3) My daily interaction with our Iraqi engineers. They became my friends, my wife sent gifts to their children. We intend to stay in touch with these brave individuals. They courageously report to work everyday because they believe in our mission to rebuild this nation to provide a brighter future for their children and grandchildren. They understand freedom is not free – it takes sacrifice and dedication. They want to see their country move forward and prosper. I thank the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for selecting me to join their great team and serve in Iraq. I would encourage you to consider signing up for this unique opportunity.



Jose Curet

*Jose Curet, Project Engineer
Gulf Region Division Central District*



Raw sewage in the street.



New sewer system is installed in East Baghdad.