

Postcards from Iraq

Doing your part

Mary Bowman, Secretary
Army Budget Office, Washington, DC

I want to acknowledge my husband and daughter for their words of encouragement and understanding. There's no way I could have volunteered to be part of this great mission without their unwavering love and support.

I have served in Iraq since October 2006 and am looking forward to returning home in June, which will end a 19 month tour. Knowing that I am on the downhill slide of my tour, I find myself reflecting back on my experiences here and the reasons that led me to leave the comfort and security of my family and home in Fredericksburg, VA. I find that I am not able to pinpoint any one single reason as to why I felt so compelled to join this great USACE team. As an Army Veteran with 28 years service, I can say the biggest draw for me was working with the soldiers. In conjunction with that, I believe in what we're doing here, and there's no question we're making a huge difference. The news media are failing to inform the American people the good news stories that are taking place here — how we're helping Iraqis rebuild their homeland. Those courageous individuals are working hard to provide a brighter future for their children and grandchildren. In the long run this effort will make a difference for all of us.

As the Administrative Officer for the Gulf Region Central District I am actively involved in the recruiting and hiring process for our U.S. Army Corps of Engineers civilians serving here. These engineers and construction workers are involved in a vital role, teaching this country's citizens how to rebuild and maintain their essential service infrastructure for a better life. Being here I have discovered that it takes people from many different career fields to help accomplish this important peacetime mission.

Back home I am a secretary for the Army Budget Office, under the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Finance Management and Comptroller (ASA FM&C)). I had such a strong desire to come but I never thought there was a place for my skills here as a civilian. Then I spoke with a fellow co-worker, Marcia Perryman, who spent a year here with GRC as a budget analyst. She was very helpful and encouraging and I learned that yes, even my skills as a civilian secretary were needed. I was blessed that my supervisor, Ms. Kathy Miller, supported my request to serve in Iraq as did my supervisory chain and fellow co-workers back home.

I have learned so much about myself and what is truly important in life. I have found that although there are still dangerous areas here in Iraq, we have a great team here looking after us and keeping us safe. The living conditions are not as comfortable as home, but they have been pleasant and the food isn't bad. I have enjoyed the opportunity to work with and get to know a few Iraqis who have helped me learn and understand their culture and what is going on beyond the wire. Through this experience I have learned first hand Iraqis are not much different then we are. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, an historic mission, that will have a positive impact on future generations. Thanks to all who stepped up and gave me the opportunity to be here.

Mary Bowman, Admin Officer, GRC HQ Baghdad
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

