

# Postcards from Iraq

## “Safety First.....Safety Always”

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I love many aspects of my chosen profession which happens to be safety, and when asked if there is any one particular area I like best, it would be in teaching others the importance of “*Safety First.....Safety Always*”. Knowing this about myself and wanting to be part of the solution in my country effort to assist in the rebuilding of Iraq, I eagerly volunteered my services as a Safety and Occupational Health Manager with the Corps of Engineer.

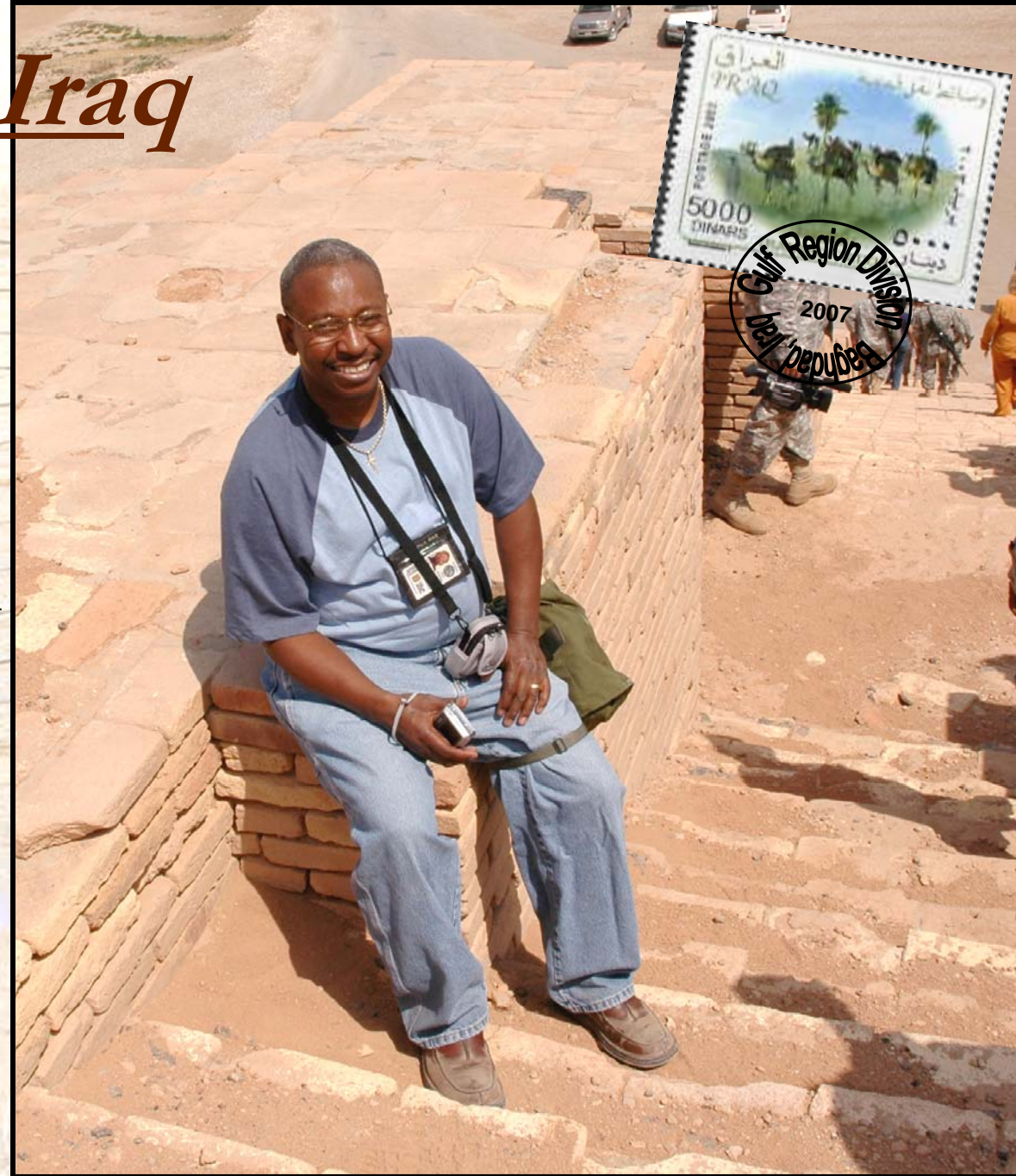
When I arrived in Iraq, I quickly realized that the concept of construction safety was something new and unfamiliar to many of the Iraq construction companies that the Corps employs. Injuries from accidents were considered a small price to pay for doing business here. In an attempt to change this mindset, the Corps has hired local nationals who serves as Safety Engineers to assist by educating and training contractors of its Safety and Health Requirement.

To assist in this endeavor, I instituted a “Construction Safety Awareness Course” as a means of transmitting the message of “*Safety First.....Safety Always*” so that those tasked with safety oversight had the skills and knowledge necessary to properly educate others of the Corps safety requirements.

The course, conducted over four days, covered such subjects as excavation safety, program management, sanitation, medical and first Aid requirements, personal protective and safety equipment, Fire prevention and protection, scaffolding, etc. Throughout the course, the importance of “*Safety First.....Safety Always*” was stressed to show that this was not only of benefit to the worker’s but the contractor as well in the form of increase work output by workers, reduce lost time injuries, monetary savings and reputation.

Two of the three local national’s assigned have completed the course and received certificates of training. The benefit of their course attendance is already being noticed throughout the command with letters of appreciation expressing increase safety on their project sites.

The acknowledgement of improvement within our project sites serve as an indicator that “*Safety First.....Safety Always*” does make a difference. Essayons!



Ralph L. Youins, working with the USACE, Gulf Region South District in An Nasiriyah, Iraq. (USACE PHOTO BY MOHAMMED ALIWI).