

# Postcards from Iraq

## Writing from 'Paradise — Baghdad, Iraq'

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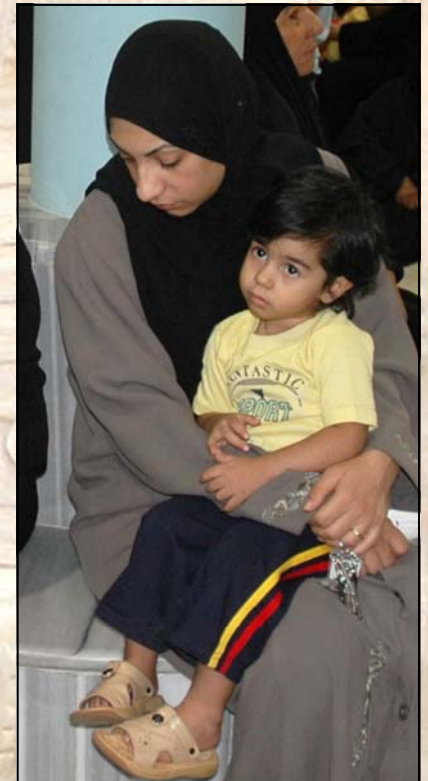
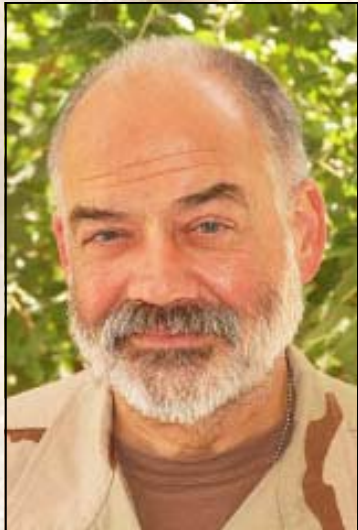
After 30 years of being a USACE chemical / mechanical engineer, I found myself wanting to do something different for while – where the effects of my efforts would be immediately visible and I could be assisting real people with the benefit of my years of experience. I saw volunteering for GWOT in Iraq or Afghanistan as being a once in a career chance to be a part of something with Global in impact.

While most of my Federal career has been working on large industrial-type projects --from inception through definitization and design to award of the construction contract; I've never before worked actual construction projects. When I showed up in GRC, I was assigned to replace the suddenly departing Resident Engineer for the Baghdad International Zone Resident Office. In this position, I led a team of 7 Americans and 30+ Iraqi engineers in overseeing ~105 projects worth ~\$240 million. As the Americans and Iraqis helped me learn my role as Resident Engineer, we became a strong team based on friendship and mutual respect. It was extremely rewarding to be able to facilitate the Iraqis' strong dedication to rebuild their country.

At the conclusion of my first deployment, I was offered the follow-on position of "Chief of Party" for USACE support to USAID in finishing USAID's 3-year -- \$2.3 Billion mission to rebuild Iraq's infrastructure. This combination of construction projects included power plants, water treatment and distribution, sewer plants, communication systems, and airports.

Not to go untold – this was a bachelor's paradise. Three free meals per day, free air conditioned lodging and no gasoline expense. I'm not sure what the recipients of my emails thought when they read "Paradise --- Baghdad, Iraq" in the signature block.

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**Stanley Reese leads a tour of U.S. radio talk show hosts of the \$2.8 million Alwaiya Children's Hospital project in Baghdad.**