

Postcards from Iraq

Experiencing a piece of history ...

By Roy P. Brase
Fort Drum, New York

In my early career back in the 70's I always wanted to go overseas, especially when some of my peers got TDY duty to Guam on a regular basis. But because I was in an apprenticeship program that opportunity passed me by. Thirty years later that desire to travel and experience a different culture was still something I definitely wanted to do, and eventually I applied for a QA position in Iraq.

It was a calling and I got my chance to fulfill my dream in September 2004. My first assignment was at Camp Iron-Horse, later known as Camp Patriot, and today is called Camp Loyalty located just south of Sadr City. We oversaw the construction of health centers, police stations, fire stations, water, sewer and electric projects throughout east Baghdad. We erected a steel overhead to protect our living area from mortars. That compound included six trailers, an office, and a conference area. When I started there, our USACE staff consisted of seven people — an Officer in Charge, a Resident Engineer, two project engineers, two local national engineers, and myself.

The workload has since considerably expanded and today they have two additional project engineers, 7 additional local national engineers (on base). In addition, they have 20 other Iraqi engineers who work outside the wire verifying progress at our various projects, submitting their reports and photos by email. Those Iraqis put their lives on the line every day trying to make their country a better place. The most memorable thing that will always stay with me is the day after the election when our Iraqi staff came to work proudly holding up their fingers stained by purple ink providing undeniable proof they had participated in an historic event. They're each working hard to make a brighter future for their children and grandchildren.

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**USACE QA Rep Roy Brase and
Spc. Farrell with
10th Mountain Division
compare unit patches.**

**Both Brase and Spc. Farrell
are from Fort Drum .**