

# Nashville District's Deployment Diary

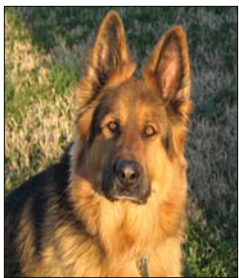
## Ray Bess

Story by Victoria Hooper and  
Photos by Ray Bess

In the Bess family, working for Nashville District, Corps of Engineers is a good thing!

In the 1950's, Arliss R. Bess, Sr. worked with Nashville District in the construction of the Old Hickory

Power Plant. In the 1960's Mildred (Micki) Bess came to work with the Nashville District and retired from the Operation Division, Regulatory Branch in 1997. In 1982, Arliss Ray Bess, Jr. came to Nashville District as a WG-5 Maintenance Worker with the Operations Division, Plant Section. In 1990, Ray moved to the Operations Division, Navigation Branch as a Civil Engineering Technician. Each family member has contributed so much to the Nashville team and



**Bess' Dog, Gunnar**

mission. Family support is something that Ray has thrived on. His lovely wife, Nicole, is one of his number one fans along with his Mom. Their blended family of Christina, Matthew and Matt's new wife, Erin, as well as step-daughter from Ray's first marriage, Amber, her husband Josh, and new granddaughter Brooke, are quite a fan club! We cannot leave out Gunnar, the beautiful German Shepherd, who makes sure the house-

hold is safe! Ray is a fortunate man. He stated, "I would like to say that when you deploy, your life at



**Ray Bess in Afghanistan**

home doesn't go on hold until you get back. During my deployment, my family experienced several difficult periods (hospital stays, a death of a family member) and if it wasn't for the complete support of my family and Nicole's ability to handle all our responsibilities so completely, I would not have had such a successful deployment."



**Bess with his family at his step-son Matt's wedding (from L-R, Christina, Ray, Erin, Matt, and Nicole)**

Ray's deployment to Afghanistan in support of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) started on October 27, 2007 for a one year

assignment in Afghanistan. Ray reached his duty station, Asadabad, Afghanistan, on November 6, 2007. He is currently serving at Camp Wright in Kunar Province. AED's mission there includes overseeing construction of five brigade-size compounds for the Afghan Border Patrol, nine roads totaling almost 265 kilometers through Kunar and Nuristan Provinces. When Ray first arrived, the AED mission had just started in Asadabad. He joined an active Army Chief Warrant Officer and a Staff Sergeant to form a three person Resident Engineer Office team. They did not even have office space. According to Ray, "We shared two work stations in an 8'x20' metal shipping container or "conex" with two other AED employees that were as-

signed to the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). We've come a long way since then. The Team has now grown to five (three military and two civilians) and we have our own 16'x40' conex office with five work stations just for the AED mission." Ray continues, "The road mission is probably among the toughest missions the Corps has in Afghanistan. This is because we are building roads through the heart of the Hindu Kush

Mountain range. Of course, being on the border with Pakistan probably doesn't help matters either." Ray has provided pictures showing the narrow, rocky, and unstable

paths just wide enough for a single pick-up truck. The majority of the roads are on steep mountain sides and are so narrow that the smallest mistake can be disastrous. Ray says the biggest challenge is widening the roads; the second is securing the roads against



**Bess enjoying time with his granddaughter, Brooke, stepdaughter Amber, and her husband Josh.**

the seasonal flash flooding. Some of the flash floods washed boulders the size of cars across the roads.

“The work here is definitely demanding and rewarding. The Afghans really



**A narrow mountain road in Afghanistan needs widening for easier travel.**

appreciate the work we are doing here. And in the past year, it’s very visible how the local economy is growing because of it. Larger trucks can now carry food and supplies to more remote villages. The older Afghans especially appreciate the roads, because taxi services have started. Now Afghans that can’t afford a vehicle can go to the major cities to shop and visit doctors without having to walk. This country is funny because in so many ways it hasn’t progressed beyond the 1800’s; yet, almost

everyone has a cell phone.” Ray’s accomplishments are many. Over the past year the

Asadabad Office has:

- \* Overseen the completion of one road and brought one road to 80% completion. Five additional roads have reached or passed the 30% completion stage.
  - \* Completed one Border Patrol compound and brought a second to 85% completion stage.
  - \* Stood up the Resident Engineer’s Office.
  - \* Began construction of AED living quarters.
  - \* Created a new “Employee Welcome Guide.”
- “I believe the best part of my deployment is I have been very fortunate to have worked with a great team here at Asadabad.

Our Officer in Charge is Chief Warrant Officer Steven Morrow. Chief Morrow is a Viet Nam Veteran and has 40 years of service to his country. He is one of a handful of people in the Army still authorized to wear the badge of the Military Assistance Group – Vietnam. And the other personnel here are just as colorful and fun to serve with as CWO

Morrow.” When asked what he sees as continuing needs for the Afghanistan country, Ray said, “Afghanistan needs time to heal and grow. It’s been widely stated that Afghanistan lost an entire generation to fighting during the Russian Occupation and during the period the Taliban ruled. The generation of Afghans that should be leading the country now, were either killed by the Russians or the Taliban. And the ones that weren’t killed were prohibited from any higher learning by the Taliban. So you have a major segment of the population that cannot contribute to the development of a modern society. The Afghanistan that we are working for won’t be realized until the children in school today take their place as leaders of their tribe, province, and country.”

Nashville District has shared many capable and competent employees to support the GWOT mission. Ray, we are proud of you and your accomplishments. Afghanistan is a better place because of your work and dedication. Thank you.



**Bess’ team works in Afghanistan to widen a road.**