

# The Newscastle

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U.S. Army Corps  
of Engineers  
Los Angeles District



**Dan Hanas and Armando Moneu received the Commander's Award for Civilian Service and celebrated returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Stories on the return of Pete Gauer and Bill Miller are on pages 3 and 5 inside.**





# Corps involved in environmentalism long before Earth Day

but, by working in harmony with them, he can preserve the heritage of future generations.”

Sturgis traced his own love of nature to his boyhood. All forms of conservation interested him, from soil to wildlife. The destruction of forests filled him with “real pain,” and he regretted that in the march “of what we often inaccurately term ‘civilization,’ some values are likely to be lost.” But he believed that the Corps could help.

The Corps could provide shelter for wildlife on coastal and inland waters. In fact, Corps’ projects already furnished “more than 3.5 million acres of land for some form of wildlife management, and recreation.” And Sturgis had a vision—to see “resting grounds for migratory game, refuges, managed public hunting, fish culture, game management, research laboratories, field headquarters for wildlife research and administration, arboretums”—all aimed at “public use and enjoyment of wildlife resources.”

“The Corps stands ready and willing,” Sturgis declared, “to join with each of you and give you every possible assistance that our authorized functions permit to obtain the greatest practicable benefits for wildlife from our projects.”

LTG Samuel D. Sturgis, Jr. A Corps Chief, in the 1950s, saw the Corps of Engineers as a Partner in Conservation.

More than a decade before the environmental movement took hold, Lieutenant General Samuel D. Sturgis, Jr., Chief of Engineers (1953-1956) envisioned the Corps of Engineers as a partner in the fight for conservation.

Addressing the International Association of Game, Fish and Conservation Commissioners in September 1953, Sturgis declared: “We must obey the laws of nature and work in harmony with natural forces rather than against them. Man cannot dominate these forces;

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**On the cover: Dan Hanas and Armando Moneu were awarded Commander’s Awards for Civilian Service and received coins after returning from deployment. Hanas was in Afghanistan and Moneu was in Iraq.**

# Building scale models or building friendships at Baghdad projects— CON-OPS' Gauer puts it together

By Mike Tharp

As a lifelong model builder, Pete Gauer loves to assemble toy models of military tanks and airplanes. Little did he know that last year, he'd be seeing and even riding in the real McCoy—in Iraq.

The project engineer from Construction Operations spent August to December in Baghdad, a mission for which he volunteered. "I wanted to do something different," he explains. "I thought it would be a once-in-a-lifetime experience."

It was. He has no desire to return, but his experiences from the tour have touched him deeply. "The Iraqi engineers we worked with became an integral part of our team," Gauer



***Pete Gauer and his Iraqi engineer friend Dr. Mohammed Jebur.***

says. "I did not plan on getting emotionally involved, but in the end I did from the friendships I made with many Iraqi engineers, soldiers we worked with and hung out with and Corps people from around the United States and Europe."

Originally slated for a sanitation engineer slot, once he landed in Baghdad, he began helping with assessments of buildings meant for future municipal use. Telegraphing his intended routes 48 hours ahead to get approval and a security detail, the Cal State Northridge graduate convoyed with members of his Forward Engineer Support Team (FEST-A) to sites all over the capital.

He and his team evaluated buildings structurally and architecturally, then provided an assessment report and project estimate to repair them.

One Iraqi engineer who began as an interpreter with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was later assigned to

FEST-A and quickly impressed Gauer and Lloyd Foster, a cost estimator from Albuquerque District. Dr. Mohammed Jebur became a good friend to both. He holds a doctorate in structural engineering, and "his local knowledge of construction pricing and general knowledge of structural engineering was an asset to our team," Gauer observes. "His friendship, knowledge and sense of humor were really important. We became more than colleagues—we became friends."

Since his return to the U.S., it's been tough for Gauer to stay in touch with him and others, but he says they're always on his mind "especially when there are reports of explosions or bombs close to where the team worked."

Gauer is particularly proud of the part he played in two projects. One was a Corps contingency contract to upgrade the 28th CASH—a combat surgical hospital that rhymes with M.A.S.H.—plus work on 30th Medical Brigade buildings. "I did more or less what I do here (L.A. District), which is quality assurance on construction contracts," he says, "but this was the first time I was exposed to contingency contracts."

Quickly, and sadly, that hospital became a center for wounded coalition troops and others.

The second project involved a request from the Ministry of Human Rights for FEST-A to participate in a site-evaluation tour through a former prison cellblock. Not just any cellblock, but one located in a complex previously used by the defunct Iraqi Police Intelligence Agency. It may not become as famous as the Nuremberg courthouse or the Balkan War Crimes tribunal at The Hague, but the building is slated to become the main repository for evidence storage for use in future war crime trials of former regime members.

"They picked a cellblock because of the walls," Gauer explains. "They wanted to have enough protection in case someone tried to launch mortars or something. They wanted to be able to show the judges that they had a facility that could adequately protect the evidence from being tampered with or destroyed."

Gauer and his team members applied their experience from building Air Force and Army facilities to the project, and Gauer notes that the Iraqi authorities said "Lloyd Foster and myself really helped them out. We provided them with a good scope of work and project estimate."

Gauer didn't do much besides his job, but as Col. Saito in "Bridge on the River Kwai" implored, "Be happy in your work," and Gauer was—seven days a week, usually till 8 or 9 p.m. An ersatz coffee shop within the heavily guarded Green Zone and AFN-TV provided the main recreation, and he played in some take-no-prisoners Uno games.

Already the size of a college linebacker, Gauer bulked up even more when wearing the de rigueur flak jacket while Humveeing around town. The closest he came to needing it was, perhaps fittingly, on Veterans Day night. Gauer and his team had finished their workday and were just about to leave the CPA building when explosions rocked the darkness. "They rushed us into a basement for two hours," he says. "One mortar had hit the parking lot and damaged 20 or 30 vehicles. You just got to the point where you put your faith in God and did the best you could."

Though he assumed a philosophical fatalism for himself, it didn't quite work that way when his wife Maria was involved. Like thousands of others in the South Asian and Middle Eastern theaters, Gauer discovered that modern technology is a double-edged light-saber. Satellite-linked cell phones and e-mail allow instant distant touch.

But they still don't substitute for being there, as Gauer discovered when he couldn't reach his wife in San Diego after she took a trip to Los Angeles. Finally connecting to her cell phone, he discovered she was stuck on the 5 Freeway after suffering a midnight tire blowout. Luckily, she was with a friend and they dealt with it, but Gauer admits he "felt helpless."

Conversely, he was able to help some of the American soldiers he met every day. "The greatest joy I got out this mission was to be able to hand my cell phone to a young soldier so he could talk to his family," he recalls. "Nobody knew then when they were going to go home."

Through their assessments, Gauer and his team members discovered that Iraqi engineers were proud of some of their



***Dr. Jebur and Gauer flank Albuquerque District's Lloyd Foster as he writes contingency contracts.***

concrete-and-rebar structures, especially those that survived the bombs of two wars. "They were very industrious," he says. "With the embargo in place for so long, they could fix anything."

Like many other District team members who have done a tour in Iraq, Gauer sees the last best hope for the country in its children. His friend Dr. Jebur, for instance, has daughters 9 and 10. "He just wants his kids to get educated," Gauer says. "He would send them to relatives in Germany to get a good education because it's so important to him. He said that the reality is that the future of Iraq is not now—it's the children."

As his four months wound down, Gauer felt jolts from both ends of the emotional spectrum. Not long before he left, he happily witnessed four huge busts of Saddam's head removed from atop the Republican Palace. And on the precise day of his departure, as the C-130 aircraft rose steeply above Baghdad International, the big man was the most scared he'd been in-country. "I hope the flare dispenser is full," he remembers thinking, keenly aware of insurgents' surface-to-air missiles in the area. "You didn't want to make it all the way and get shot down when you're leaving."

Gauer is candid about the risks riveted to the mission.

"In reality it's a dangerous place," he says. "You need to separate the cow patties from the grass, if you know what I mean, and tell people there is the potential to get hurt over there. Every time you go out, there's always that chance..."

Now on TDY in Arizona, Gauer flashes back to his tour each day when he passes the fields around Yuma and sees groves of date trees. Or when he glimpses the scale models of the Strykers, Abrams Tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles in his den. He has now seen those machines with his own eyes, not in a glass case but at work and at war.



***Rockets slammed into a parking lot near CPA headquarters on Veterans Day.***

# Arizona planning branch's Miller pilots Baghdad water system into cleaner channels

By Mike Tharp

In the years he logged time as an amateur pilot before he deployed to Iraq, Bill Miller was a fussy budget flier.

No task was too technical, no dial too dim, no gauge too vague for him not to check and double-check for hours before takeoff. Then the Corps newcomer did six months in Baghdad, returning just after Thanksgiving last year.

Once back home, he decided to fly to someplace for the very first time—Lake Havasu, Ariz. Miller hoisted himself into the cockpit of his Cessna 152. “This is about the least dangerous thing I’ve done in the last six months,” he recalls thinking. “I got in and told myself, ‘Just don’t pass the Colorado River.’” He made it just fine.

A study team leader in the Planning Division’s Phoenix office, Miller joined the Corps less than two years ago. With the precision he uses on preflight checklists, he cites his reasons for going overseas:

– “I was new to the Corps and I felt this was a good way to become part of the organization;

– “Regardless of how you feel about the war itself, this was simply a humanitarian mission, and that was the part of the mission I wanted to be part of.”

Originally assigned as a geographic information systems analyst, once Miller arrived he discovered there weren’t enough computers to work in his specialty. So he became a project manager for water treatment plants and water distribution in Baghdad. “I worked closely with the Baghdad Water Authority,” he says. “Because I’m



**Bill spent his birthday touring Babylon with Rich Heine, SWF, in 147-degree sunshine.**

a planner, I wanted to fall back on that skill set and help them figure out how to make it happen.”

In June 2003 there was still plenty of money—mostly funds confiscated from Saddam regime coffers—to work the problem. And



**Bill Miller inbound on a C-130 on the last leg of his trip into Baghdad, this time as a passenger.**

was there ever a problem. The capital’s water distribution system was at least 30 years old, and the Chinese-made pipes and parts would never win any ASCE awards.

Most of the plants Miller worked on suffered from neglect, not war damage. “I can’t say enough about the integrity of the Iraqi engineers,” Miller says. “With little more than duct tape and baling wire they kept (the system) operational.” Generators, for example, had a shelf life of 2,000 hours, but Iraqi engineers had kept some of them churning up to 10,000. Manufacturers arriving on the postwar scene were “shocked,” Miller recalls, “that there were products long ago discontinued but still operational.”

Before the war, many of the engineers had moved their families into the water treatment plants to help protect and run them. To avoid being bombed, they spelled out “Human Shield” in *flour* on the plants’ rooftops. “During the looting they managed to hold their own and protect the treatment plants,” Miller marvels.

Indeed, Baghdad’s water quality, emerging from a war, was surprisingly good, even meeting U.S. standards. The problem was distribution. Plants produced enough water to supply 3 million people—but Baghdad’s population is around 5.5 million. Low water pressure also created a black market, with Baghdadis hooking up illegal pipes to the mains.

Working with UNICEF and nongovernmental organizations, Miller and his team installed numerous treatment units about the size of a semi-trailer truck around the city. The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers flank Baghdad, and its groundwater is only 1 to 3 meters deep, so the city didn’t lack for supply. “Treating it was the challenge,” says Miller.



***Out in front of Baghdad City Hall, Bill tries to teach two Iraqi boys how a yo-yo works. It was the first time they'd ever seen the this kind of toy.***

Sadr City, once known as Saddam City, posed particular problems. Encompassing only 4 percent of Baghdad's footprint, it houses 20 percent of its population, cramped into cracker-box hovels. Revived with \$27 billion from the congressionally approved supplemental budget for Iraq, a water treatment project for Sadr City is heading toward completion. A groundbreaking will be held this summer, and Miller expects it to be producing water by August.

On the fecal front, Miller supported Susan Champine, chief of operations in the Albuquerque District, to establish sewage treatment plants. They identified 217 Baghdad neighborhoods that had standing sewage in the streets. During the six months of Miller's tour, he estimates that the team lowered that number by 70 percent. (Besides sharing a mission, the pair also shares the same birthday—August 8.)

Unlike many Americans in Iraq, who count backwards on their mental short-timer's calendar, Miller chose to extend his tour. His logic was simple but compelling: "At about 100 days (in-country), I felt I knew what was going on and how to be more effective. And I was more productive the last 50 days of my tour than the first 100 because of the steep learning curve."

He also thought he'd never again have such a chance and challenge.

Not to say he didn't harbor second thoughts. Bunking at the Al-Rasheed Hotel, Miller was asleep when 122-mm. rockets twice slammed into its walls. Other guests those nights included comedian Drew Carey, on a USO tour, and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz. None of them were injured.

He also had a close call on a rare day off from his grueling 14/7 regimen. Returning from a bus trip to the fabled city of Babylon, Miller and his colleagues were jarred when a roadside bomb exploded just after their bus had passed. No one was hurt but all were shook up. "We were very, very lucky," he says.

Miller wryly compares his Baghdad tour to his five summers at Boy Scout camp in Payson, Ariz. Not in terms of the duties and danger, but because of similar "camaraderie and tomfoolery": Everybody was away from home, he explains, everybody was away from normal life, everybody had to live and work with the same individuals 24 hours a day, seven days a week. "You could tell the people who had never been in that kind of environment before," he adds.

An environmental resource major at Arizona State University where his father is a professor, Miller measures Iraq with the same diagnostic yardstick that he now applies to endangered species management. "The ability of the Iraqis to succeed will depend whichever government provides security," he says. "That will be the one that stays in power. I'm not sure we're doing a good job of providing security—we show up after it (violence) happens."

Miller also questions whether democracy can work "as the city (of Baghdad) and the country become more violent. It seems a lot of our decisions there were being made based on politics in the United States, rather than conditions in that country."

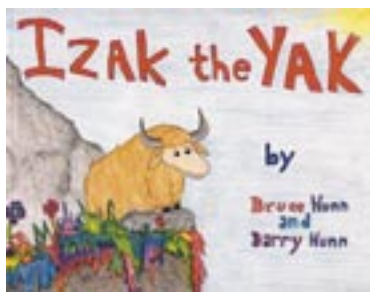
The night before he left for the Mideast, Miller made a two-and-a-half-hour videotape on which he read stories to his two young children, urged them to be good and bid them goodnight. "I was sure my daughter wouldn't forget, but I was worried about my son," he remembers.

By the time he returned home, his son Billy, now 1½, had already learned to walk and had spoken his first word—"No." Four-year-old Isabella welcomed him with big hugs, as did his wife Judy. Billy called him "Mama"—but then he called every other man at the airport the same name.

Not long afterwards, Miller decided to take "my golf cart with wings," as he calls the Cessna, "to someplace I'd never flown before."

And that's when Bill Miller stopped being a nervous pilot and remembered his lesson from Iraq: Just go out and do it.

In no time at all, Lake Havasu shimmered below, reflecting the morning sun.



# Perseverance pays off

By Pam Wills

It all started with yak butter. Nancy Mehaffie (CO-High Desert) was

having a dinner party and “Murder on the Orient Express” was the theme of the evening. She promised her guests yak butter and was sure that someone in Los Angeles sold it. But when she never found any, her husband, Bruce Hunn, sculpted a yak out of a cake of regular butter and it became the centerpiece. Nancy says, “We talked at dinner about how no one had ever done any books on yaks, so we decided to do one.”

Bruce, a human factors engineer at Edwards AFB, wrote the story. Izak is the smallest yak in his herd and questions the “yak way of life,” such as why yaks argue so much and butt heads. In the end, his willingness to not give up wins out. The writing took about a year, changing as the story was illustrated. Bruce’s brother, Barry, did the colored pencil illustrations on textured paper. Barry is a musician and after playing banjo for many years developed focal dystonia, a movement disorder in which sustained muscle contractions cause twisting and repetitive movements or abnormal postures. When it came time to illustrate “Izak the Yak,” he had to learn how to draw with his left hand.

The illustrating took another year.

The book is for ages 6-10. “It has good values,” Nancy said. “We went around to publishers, but found no interest, so we decided to self-publish. I had a good time learning the publishing business. Lots of new fun terms like gutters, scanner resolution, perfect binding and ISBN numbers. I purchased a book on self-publishing, read it from cover to cover and walked my way through each phase.” With Nancy as publisher, they created Pahsimeroi Press in Lancaster, CA. “The biggest challenges were paying the printer and taking a risk.” The cost to publish the book was about \$15,000. “The professional scanning was the most expensive part.



*Barry, Bruce and Nancy*

“The next big phase is the marketing and sales, which I’ll have to learn, too.

When you self-publish, the opportunities to market are limited because the big publishing houses lead the pack. A self publisher has to be creative to get their product known.”

*Izak the Yak* is available through their website: [www.izaktheyak.com](http://www.izaktheyak.com).

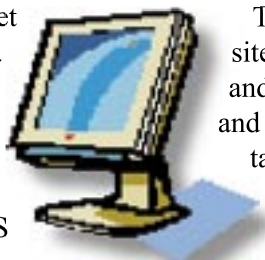
## What’s the big deal about the L. A. District Intranet?

By Pam Wills

Double-click the blue “e” on your desktop and up comes the Los Angeles District homepage. The homepage is the front door to the Internet and the world, but it is also the first screen you see of the District’s intranet.

How is an intranet different from the Internet? An intranet is a private network set up by a group such as a government agency, company, school or business to be used by only those who are authorized, usually requiring a login with a password to the network that gives access to the intranet.

Glenn Emigh, Information Management office, is the web master for the District intranet. “Our intranet provides a place for District organizations. We turn over space to them to manage for themselves. However, some organizations do not have resources or expertise and IMO helps them with it.” Some of the sections that are helped are EEO, Toastmasters and the GIS



Center.

The homepage includes the district scroller, an announcement box for news and upcoming events. “The website is designed so that the intranet is the individual’s home page. They will see District announcements as soon as they open Internet Explorer.” If someone wants to get something up on the district scroller, they should contact Patsy Delgado or MAJ David Hurley.

The daily quotes featured on the intranet homepage come from the Internet and are generated automatically. The Los Angeles District divisions and support offices are accessed through the USACE tab, with links to USACE headquarters, other divisions and EngLink.

The District Intranet has many useful links to other sites. Under Hot Buttons, there are links to CEFMS and the Daily Bulletin. Search engines such as Google and Yahoo are also accessed here. Under the Reference tab are the GIS Center, Mapquest, and the District Phone Book. Toastmasters, VA and Army Benefits Center are listed under Employee Services.

# Maximum incentive award (A)MARCS ribbon cutting

Story and photo by Jennie Salas

It's win-win all the way 'round. Corps representatives recently joined Air Force officials at Davis-Monthan at a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the completion of a \$7 million aircraft parts processing facility for the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center (AMARC). During the event the L.A. District awarded its prime contractor a performance-based incentive award for construction. This was the first time the District awarded the maximum amount to one contractor.

Sundt Construction, Inc. earned the \$150,000 award for their superior performance during construction of the facility, also known as the Aerospace Maintenance Reclamation Facility. "It's very seldom that the Corps will offer incentive awards on a project, and even more seldom that the contractor will receive the full amount of the incentive," commented CPT James DeLapp, area commander of the Arizona-Nevada area Corps office. The final payment was set aside under the guidance of the Air Force as an incentive earned over the duration of the project.

The award consisted of three incentives: after design, mid-point and final. Some of the rating elements included quality of workmanship, cooperation and responsiveness, adherence to schedules, implementation of safety plans and effectiveness of job-site supervision.

John Sundt, president of Sundt, received the award. "We are very delighted. This was a very smooth project. The Corps is one of our favorite clients," commented Sundt. The Sundt Corporation has been doing work for the Department of Defense (DOD) since 1910.

Saving the government millions of dollars each year, AMARC's parts reclamation effort provides critical



***CPT James DeLapp with Rick Bucannen, John Sundt, Jerry Clark, John Keever as the \$150,000 incentive check is presented.***

components in support of active, Guard and Reserve aircraft. Foreign military also refer to AMARC for support. Parts are typically disassembled, inspected, packaged and shipped at the processing facility. AMARC even custom-makes its own shipping crates by tapping into the resources of a nearby lumber mill.

The new 37,000 square foot, state-of-the-art facility comes complete with a unique assembly line and sophisticated equipment that includes motion lighting to reduce electrical use, a bead blaster, ultrasound and X-ray machines and an automated conveyor belt. Customers benefit by the increase in efficiency and shorter wait times for their products.

James Pennino, Command civil engineer, Mission Support Directorate, Headquarters Air Force Material Command recognized the Corps of Engineers, its contractor and the base installation for their efforts. "You can't make these projects a reality without these type of partnerships," he said.

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