

# Postcards from Iraq

## **From Minnesota to Iraq and back again ...**

*By David Valen, Electrical Engineer  
St. Paul District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*

I started my current tour in Iraq in February 2007. I served previously here from June 2003 to December 2003. I went back to the St Paul District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers where I have worked for most of my more than 33 years government service.

After the first time I was here I did not think I would be back. But I volunteered again to see the changes and progress. During my first tour, I worked on electrical power projects, updating and repairing power plants and distribution systems which were neglected under Saddam's regime and in severe disrepair. Progress has been made but it has a long way to go to provide full time power to the nation.

This time around I was chosen to take over the project management of the Primary Healthcare Clinics in Gulf Region Central District, which includes Baghdad and Anbar Provinces. There are 30 new Clinics in the Baghdad area and 11 Clinics in Anbar Province. The clinics are in various stages of completion. Some of the clinics are ready to receive and treat patients. Two of the clinics in Baghdad, Al-Washash and Al-Hibna, were each originally expected to see approximately 110 patients daily, but now that they're open are each providing medical care to more than 300 patients daily.

Each of these facilities is a modern medical clinic offering doctors offices, exam rooms, a pharmacy and kitchen. Several of them have libraries, conference rooms, emergency treatment rooms and other facilities. The program also provides medical equipment (x-ray machine, labs, etc.), office equipment, and furniture along with training for the staff. Doctors and nurses now have modern equipment to help them meet the primary care and urgent care needs of the people of Iraq.

I have worked with Iraqi Engineers that care about their people and want a better life for their friends and families. They are very passionate about completing the clinics. Those Iraqi Engineers and Contractors show tremendous courage every day getting to the job site as they face threats of kidnapping, extortion, and murder of their loved ones. I have met people from all over the United States and around the world who have volunteered to help in our efforts to rebuild the infrastructure of Iraq.

I would like to thank, my best friend and loving wife, Meg, for her support and understanding and also my children Eric, Beth and Bill for keeping my spirits up during my time in Iraq.

*By David Valen  
Health Care Project Management  
Gulf Region Central District, Baghdad  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*



**Al Washash Primary Healthcare Clinic  
Baghdad, Iraq**



**Baghdad mother awaits medical care  
for her sick infant.**



**David Valen**