

# Postcards from Iraq

## Passion you develop working with the courageous Iraqi people

By Joanne Gibbs

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Initially, I came to Iraq for a six month deployment. Many months after that original obligation, I'm still here. Some of us go through life believing we have it all figured out; that we have all the answers. Suddenly God intervenes and we realize that he has greater things in store for us as we embark on a new journey, to a place he wants us to be. So, here I am still in Iraq.

There is a passion that you soon develop especially after meeting and interacting with the Iraqi people; and seeing the incredible courage they display every day helping rebuild their country and safeguarding their newfound democracy. The Iraqi people, who represent a blend from different tribes, have a genuine pride and love for their country. They definitely believe in freedom.

In addition, there is nothing like the patriotism you feel each time you see our soldiers unselfishly giving of themselves and the sacrifices they make each and everyday in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Being the mother of a soldier who has served two deployments supporting this effort, you can't help but want to support them in some way. So, it's with honor that I am still here contributing to this historic effort of helping Iraq move forward.

This is a very incredible, interesting and unique work experience. One of the greatest rewards has been interacting with such a unique, diverse group of professional people from throughout the world. It's not too often that such opportunities come along.

This has been an experience that has forever altered my course. On a personal note, I have finally learned to relax; and I have learned that there are some things in life that are not the great sense of urgency as I once thought. Sometimes in our daily challenges, we miss and/or forget what is really important. There are times we must re-evaluate and determine what are the true priorities; focusing on the bigger picture.

We take for granted that we will have power, water, heat, etc.; nothing here can be assumed; just appreciated. Your AhAh moment really comes when you see people without those basic essential services still finding a way to smile. I read something that said "ask a person his occupation, and you have learned how he pays his bills. Ask a person his preoccupation, and you have discovered the passion of his life." My preoccupation is and has always been helping and serving others. From another personal note, being here in Iraq has given me the chance to assist in improving the quality of life for others which I am so grateful to do. Each office in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has its own uniqueness, however, being here has allowed me to see the Corps at work, full force; and what a difference the Corps has made. The schools, the hospitals, roads, bridges and all the other logistical and engineering work the Corps has overseen in Iraq has really increased my pride in what USACE is all about.

One question I get asked a lot from people back stateside is "aren't you scared?" The answer is "no." Actually, there is nothing to be afraid of. There are so many safety measures in place. In addition, there is a certain element of danger where ever you are. Many individuals are allowing fear of the "unknown" to cause them to miss an opportunity of a lifetime. PLEASE DO NOT BE OR BECOME ONE OF THOSE INDIVIDUALS.

I know that a lot of you are considering stepping up to the plate and assisting the Corps in its efforts. The Corps has an important mission here in Iraq and you could be an important player. Please consider joining our team.

I am highly honored to be an American; highly honored to be a member of the United States Army Corps of Engineers; and highly honored to serve.

*"BE KINDER THAN NECESSARY, FOR EVERYONE YOU MEET IS FIGHTING SOME KIND OF BATTLE."* ~ Unknown

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**Joanne Gibbs says hello to Gen. David Petraeus, Multi-National Force-Iraq Commander.**

