

Postcards from Iraq

Making It Happen

by Karen L. Johnson

From a USACE, Mobile District Veteran to
a USACE, Transatlantic Programs Center Warrior

Working for Mobile District for 28 years has given me a great deal of leadership skills, training and knowledge to be the best Contract Specialist I can be. I am very proud to be coming from such a great District.

My first tour to Iraq was for 13 months (January 2005 – February 2006) as a Contract Specialist coming from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District Contracting Division, Mobile, Ala.

I originally signed up for a 4 month tour of duty in Iraq, but when I came over I quickly realized that there was so much work to be accomplished here. I felt like I could make a difference. My 4 months rapidly turned into 13 months. After awarding contracts for schools, hospitals, court houses, police stations, roads, water and sewage treatment plants, etc....I must say that time went by very fast. But, I also knew that I still had so much more to give to the Mission, the Team, and the Iraqi People. I wasn't finished yet.

After leaving Iraq in February 2006, I was very fortunate to receive a Contract Specialist promotion with the USACE, Transatlantic Programs Center

(TAC), Iraq Reach Back Team, Contracting Office, Winchester, Va. The Iraq Reach Back Team (Carl Stubbert and JoAnn Bray) believe in commitment, working together as a team, and always maintaining a "Get 'er Done" attitude. I appreciate them tremendously for affording me this great opportunity to return to Iraq for another year.

In March 2007, after the passing of my mother, Mrs. Ernestine Johnson, I decided to come back to Iraq to continue making a difference. My mother always said: "All Things Are Possible." I know that she would be so proud of me today, because she knows that I love to help people. She taught me that I CAN make a difference, to always reach for my goals, and to keep my positive and "CAN DO" attitude. The integrity, loyalty and values she instilled in me will stay with me forever.

At Gulf Region South, Tallil, Iraq, I have been honored to serve under Col. Roger Gerber, Col. Larry McCallister, Col. Gary Johnston and now Col. Stephen Hill whose vision statement is "MEPS, with Safety" which stands for Mission, Engagement, People, Systems, with Safety. I believe in Col. Hill's vision and will continue to incorporate it into both my personal and professional commitments. After arriving back at GRS, I hit the ground running—awarding and closing out a large variety of contracts. I worked hurricane disaster duty in the past, but nothing beats the experience I'm receiving here in Iraq. While in Tallil, my spare time consist of Church, working out, watching movies and salsa dancing.

I'm very proud to be working with wonderful people here with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, the military, contractors, and the Iraqi people. Everyone works together as a TEAM. I want to THANK my family and friends for their support and prayers. I'm back to help accomplish the mission and get the work done Effectively and Efficiently. *ESSAYONS!*



Johnson with Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Dorko,
USACE Gulf Region Division Commander.



Karen L. Johnson, Contract Specialist with the Gulf Region South District.
(USACE PHOTOS BY MOHAMMED ALIWI)