

# *Postcards from Iraq*

## **A View from Both sides of the Wire**

by **Michael Fellenz**  
Buffalo District, N.Y.

To my family and friends I was crazy. Why, would I ever want to go to Iraq? There were a variety of reasons all of which would prove meaningless once I landed in theater. Flying in, getting accustomed to the heat and the landscape are all stories other individuals have invariably shared with you.

Once here, I found the travels exhilarating and the work more rewarding than words can describe. My first tour was to the religious City of Najaf. There I managed the reconstruction of schools, police and fire stations, border forts, water treatment units and networks, roads and communication towers. Iraq's infrastructure had crumbled during the reign of Saddam Hussein.

I went outside the wire six days a week for eight and a half months and nothing could have prepared me for what I saw. Even the simplest of amenities that we take for granted are seldom seen here. While all of my projects are special, the schools hold a special place in my heart. There is nothing more rewarding than seeing a child's eyes light up at the sight of their new school. While schools in the states feature state of the art computers, pools and electronics that rival one another, the schools here in Iraq lack such basic amenities as running water, chalkboards and restrooms. My first trip took me on a tour of an ancient land with tremendous historical and religious significance.

Scenes of the Hanging Gardens, Babylon, the Gates of Ishtar, the Lion of Babylon and the 4,000 year old Ziggurat of Ur, near the birthplace of Abraham are all memories that draw a smile to my face and an opportunity to share with family and friends.

My second tour was a tad bit different from the first. While I experienced life outside the wire during my first tour, the tour in Nasiriyah focused more on projects located inside the fence line. A fact both my family, fiancée' and children don't seem to mind. What most people don't seem to understand is that once you go out its difficult not to want to go again. Not sure if it's the adrenaline rush, the opportunity to see a different culture, an opportunity to visit the people or all of the above. Whatever it is, I'll never be able to convey the feeling of traveling with a PSD Team out in the desert or within the city confines. This tour I was able to help our own, the soldiers who are stationed here or visit this base. Though I still maintain projects outside the wire, my primary function is to handle the military construction projects that were being constructed on base. The ability to give something back to the troops is a welcome relief and one that I'm grateful for. I've met some of the finest men and women our country has to offer, all in the name of freedom. While I can't go into specifics on the projects that I manage within the base, I can assure you that this trip has been as rewarding, if not more so than the first. Essayons!



**Michael Fellenz , a project management specialist with the Gulf Region South District.**  
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