

Postcards from Iraq

My Iraq Corps Family

by Stephanie Ehnstrom
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Would you believe that I have such a family as a USACE/Iraq family? Well, that is what I found myself a member of since being in Baghdad, Iraq.

Let me introduce my USACE/Iraq family. There's my supervisor Gary Hawkins who has this beautiful smile, Professor Bob Sanders, you can't mistake his voice, Eric Bluhm, I took a liking to him because he has this contagious laugh, Eric Aubrey, was shy at first but he warmed up when I commented that I liked his red hair, Mark Moody, he is one person I wish I had more time to get to know better because he has a great sense of humor and is very polite, Derrick Dunlap reminds me of an Englishman riding his bike on a England cobblestone road only Derrick rides his bike with his "battle rattle" gear on. Now the two women I call my sisters; Marlene Judy, is my roommate and co-worker in Program Management. I'm so lucky to have met Marlene. Marlene works in Emergency Operations back home at the Charleston, South Carolina District, and she came to Iraq prepared for emergencies. I joke with Marlene about what she brought with her she could survive any emergency. The other woman I liked to call my sister is Marcia Washington; Marcia is a lovely and God fearing woman. I have a feeling that we were meant to meet because she's been a reminder for me that whatever happens while I'm here I'm in God's hands.

Now I've introduced my USACE/Iraq family. There are many other people who have played an important role while I've been here in Iraq that I haven't mentioned but they know that they have touched my heart and I won't forget them. I'm sure there are other make believe families too. Maybe it's because the only link that you have with someone is that you're working for the same purpose and you are a long ways from home.

Of course I endured CRC like the rest of the Corps people and first I felt so distanced -- just a number, or a body to put needles into -- but I wouldn't have thought once I've been living and working for awhile amongst the Corps people in Iraq, that I would feel like part of a family.

The things I would tell people back in my District about why they should go to Iraq to work is this: get adjusted to the weather, your sleeping arrangements, and get to know who is who, and you will begin to feel like your working in any other state side Corps office. (Of course there are a few differences: the pay, the food, the weather, the streets, etc., but that's about it.)

To my USACE/Iraq family I'm going to have memories forever with me and I'll tell my friends and my real family all about you.

-Stephanie



Stephanie Ehnstrom in Baghdad (Photo provided by Stephanie Ehnstrom)