

Postcards from Afghanistan

Afghan assignment — an adventure like no other

By Vicky Cummings

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When I first received the offer to deploy to Afghanistan, I was very excited, and not one bone in my body felt frightened at the possibility of heading into another foreign country, let alone a war zone. I felt sure that this would be yet another interesting experience — to go along with other rewarding and memorable moments that have highlighted my life over the past five years working in various countries. I believed this would not only be a chance to do my part as an American, in some small way, but also an opportunity to get an up close view of the Middle East.

Deploying to Afghanistan was quite unique and intense, as one gets used to the military life-style preparation. Numerous required immunizations had to be received and training courses had to be taken. I was issued duffle bags full of equipment and taught how to use this lifesaving equipment. I proudly wore the Army Civilian desert camouflage uniform on a daily basis, and could sense this was becoming my most ultimate adventure. Arriving and moving in country proved to be nothing like I had ever encountered in my travels, I'd flown of course, however now I was aboard huge C-130 military aircraft and helicopters sitting among soldiers from all over the world or on ground convoys seeing a part of the world I'd never imagined.

When I started my duties at the AED USACE Area Office on Kandahar Air Base, the work proved to be quite interesting — it's amazing what dedicated people from throughout the United States and the world can accomplish in a war zone. Despite all the challenges, USACE projects are moving forward with a vengeance. The construction is so impressive and the cause so great. Many Afghan people are working shoulder to shoulder with our USACE staff to get it done. They truly want to see their country evolve into a modern civilization.

I was honored to meet a very nice Afghan family who were kind enough to invite me into their home. This home, like all others, was built of sand and mud and had not withstood bombings by any means. There was no electricity, water, or comforts that we as Americans take for granted. The genuine warmth and friendship I felt when being greeted by this family of 7 girls, 2 boys, the mother, maternal and paternal grandmothers, was an

experience I will cherish and never forget. Despite the lack of basic necessities, this family insisted on giving me a gift to take home with me. Of course, we could not converse in language, but I could see in their eyes their kind hearts and gentle souls.

I am grateful USACE invited me to join the great team helping the Afghan people build a brighter future for their children and grandchildren. Its an historic mission — an adventure like no other.



Getting ready to board a Russian helicopter to fly from Kandahar to Kabul in May 2008.



My husband Jerry and I are recognized with end of tour awards by AED Commander Col. Tom O'Donovan in Sept 2008.



An Afghan family warmly welcomes Vicky Cummings into their home.