

Postcards from Iraq

Many Improvements since '04

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I've done a lot of traveling to scenic places like Ur, Bayji, Mosul, Dahuk, Taji and Baqubah and some not-so-scenic ones like Speicher, Warrior, War Horse, Anaconda, and Adder. I do see what I think are many improvements since I was here in '04.

There are numerous vehicles on the roads, and a number are relatively new. The markets are more orderly and seemingly well stocked. Lots of satellite dishes, even way (a long way) out in the desert. Sales of electric appliances are still climbing. There is new construction going on – some homes, some apartments, a few businesses.

Many places, like Najaf, have construction going on in numerous places all through the city. Many of the projects GRD is working on enable that construction – electric generation, water treatment plants, hospitals, public health clinics, police facilities, wastewater systems and other public facilities.

During one trip, I was able to go to Abraham's birthplace – Ur. The Ziggurat was amazing. Built in 2130 B.C., it still has two of the three stories that were originally built. There's a temple next to it that has the oldest free-standing arch in the world. The bricks in the buildings were all held together with tar from the oil seeps around the area – no cement or mud mortar anywhere. Some of the tar was still flexible.

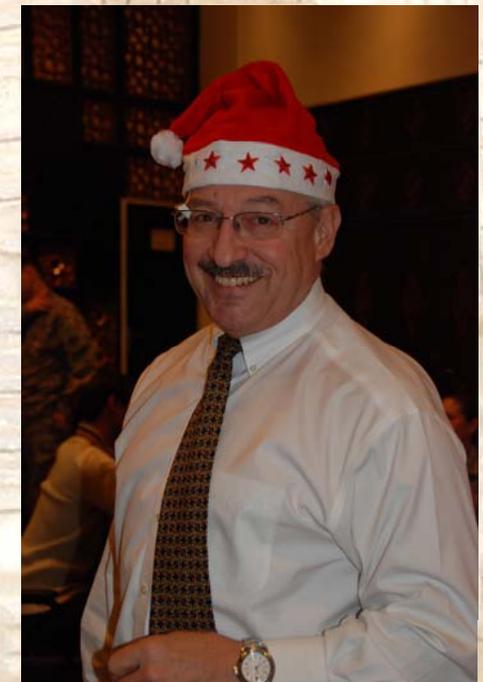
The old wall of the city was there, and the new wall was way out there beyond it. Interestingly, there were no wells in the city at all – all water came from the river. The city was 2-3 km wide and nearly 5-6 km long, until the Euphrates moved anyway. They say the river moved about 10 km away from the city around 600 B.C. (I think – maybe it was earlier than that) and the



CNN interviews Mike about the \$180 million Qudas Power Plant expansion project in Baghdad, Iraq that will add approximately 180 megawatts to the power grid.



Mike's outstanding service in Iraq is recognized with the silver de Fleury medal presented by Maj. Gen. Eyre, GRD commander.



Getting into the Christmas spirit at the 2008 GRD Tree Lighting ceremony.