

# “Face to face” with family members serving in Iraq

by Joan Mier

Modern technology can be a great thing, especially when it allows some Corps of Engineers employees serving in Iraq “face time” with their families. That was the lead-in on a local Albuquerque television news piece that aired June 11. The video teleconference was conducted specifically for the media, who expressed an interest in talking with some of Albuquerque District’s civilians currently serving in Iraq. As a courtesy, we contacted family members and offered them a chance to speak “face to face” with their loved ones following the media interview. The photographer asked if Betty Mitchell and her son Mike, an engineering technician, would mind if he covered some of their conversation. That exchange, which no one anticipated would be covered or televised, became the focus of a very positive, intimate piece that effectively showed the human side of our civilians serving there and the support they get from their families back home.

First, they spoke of family.

“Everybody’s doing great. Dad said to tell you he’s sorry he couldn’t make it,” Betty said to Mike. “He said to tell you he loves you.”

“Well you tell him I love him too,” Mike replied.

“He still can’t decide whether to get the truck fixed or buy a new one,” she said.

“Tell him to bite the bullet and get a new one,” Mike advised.

Betty next told him about his sister returning from volleyball camp and his brother getting ready to take off for vacation Bible school.

“We really need more people to come over to Iraq,” Mike said. “It’s not the easiest job to do but it’s really worthwhile.”

“I know it is and I’m really proud of you. I show that picture of you with the Iraqi children holding that banner thanking the Corps of Engineers around to everybody,” Betty said. “I want them to know the great things the Corps of Engineers is doing over there and how much it is appreciated.”

After the interview ended the reporter asked Betty what it was like actually seeing her son face to face from Baghdad.

“When you see them all your love just pours out of you,” she said, fighting back tears.

The anchor person added that most video teleconferencing done by the Corps is done for business reasons, allowing engineers from the states to compare notes with those in Iraq to come up with the best engineering solutions.

“What a great idea,” he concluded. *(Editor’s note: The Albuquerque District currently has 8 district members serving in Iraq. Eighteen other district civilians have deployed and returned home since the Corps began its mission there more than one year ago.)* □

## Conchas Rangers rescue distressed swimmer

by Julie R. Stone

Park Ranger, Conchas Lake

Albuquerque District Rangers Steve Peterson and Bob Mumford were in the right place at the right time on Saturday, June 5 when they noticed three girls, ages 14 – 16 years old, had fallen off their jet ski at Conchas Lake. According to Peterson, all three were trying to swim back to the jet ski and were showing signs of fatigue.

“It was obvious to us that these girls were in trouble,” Peterson said. “Their lifejackets were too big and they were having trouble trying to swim in them.”

Peterson explained that one of the girl’s lifejacket had come apart and she

was trying to swim with it under her arm when she became distressed.

“You could see the panic in her face,” he said. “She was starting to grab onto the girl swimming in front of her.” The girl saw the Corps of Engineers Patrol Boat coming to her aid and called out that she couldn’t make it. Rangers then used a long telescoping pole called a “pike pole” to reach out to the swimmer and pulled her safely aboard their boat. After repairing the lifejacket, rangers safely returned the girl to her friends.

Ranger Bob Mumford gives water

safety programs at local schools and said, “This year we took the time to go out to the schools and talked to nearly 1600 kids about water safety and lifejackets because we care. We don’t want incidents like this to happen.” Mumford stressed that there is more to wearing a lifejacket than just putting it on. “We always say to people ‘make sure you wear your lifejacket’ and these girls were doing that, but it’s just as important to make sure it’s not falling apart and that it fits properly,” he said. “If you’ve got all that, it will save your life.” □