



AROUND THE
WORLD
IN A DAY

ONE REP TAKES A GLOBAL APPROACH, LITERALLY

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MANA member **Les Rapchak** should be forgiven if earlier this year the title of a 1969 movie, “If It’s Tuesday, This Must Be Belgium” ran through his mind. Sure, it was still a Tuesday, but for Rapchak the country was a bit different — and how different it was!

Rapchak left the Toronto, Ontario, headquarters location of his **Tech Sales Company** and in the matter of a couple of days completed a whirlwind trip to Basra in Southern Iraq, via Frankfurt, Germany, and Kuwait, with a stop afterwards in Istanbul.

According to the rep, “My one-day visit to Basra was just an incredible experience. Here is a country ready to be rebuilt, and I was there to, I hope, help in the effort.”

CONSIDERING THE OPTIONS

As he explained the why and how of his trip to war-torn Iraq, the Canadian rep said that since opening his doors in 1983, he has served as a rep covering all of Canada with several product lines. “Over the years, however, we have cut the number of our product lines dramatically. Then 10 years ago, we decided to take a unique approach by becoming a global agent. In that capacity the first product we took on was one that removes calcium, rust and other waterborne deposits from piping, heat exchangers and all types of water-cooled, heated or operated equipment. A unique feature of the product is that it has the lowest corrosion rate of any product of equal strength on the market.”

He continued that his partnership with the manufacturer, Dynamic Descaler, “offered a fantastic opportunity to market worldwide as a global agent. In addition to the Dynamic Descaler product, I also market internationally for a manufacturer of compressed air blow-off products, vortex tubes, static control and related technology. All of the products I represent are unique, of high quality and provide good support. In international sales, every one of these selling features is important for the contacts and master distributors I work with in China, Japan, Korea, India, Southeast Asia and the Middle East, Europe, Australia and Africa. We’re just now breaking into Central and South America.”

He adds that working in all corners of the world is more than enough to fill his plate, as “it’s a demanding mar-

keting job that requires learning different communication styles, and a variety of laws for each country. The challenges can be overwhelming but also extremely satisfying and a lot of fun.”

ON TO IRAQ

According to Rapchak, “My purpose in undertaking this trip was to take part in a seminar at the State Company for Petrochemical Industries in Basra. The seminar was put together by Nezar Hindi, who is with a company called Atto, with offices in Baghdad, Basra and Kirkuk. His main business is supplying material to the oil and gas industry in Iraq. As you can imagine in a country such as Iraq coming out of a devastating war, there is a great deal of equipment that has to be cleaned and repaired. Attending this seminar were many representatives from power plants in the Basra area. Thankfully most of the attendees understood English, but Hindi was very helpful in translating when needed.”

Rapchak indicated that he was extremely pleased with the results of the seminar. “Everything went flawlessly. I found the Iraqi people to be attentive, respectful, intelligent and very friendly. In addition, the food they had prepared was so good — chicken, lamb, rice, fruits, nuts and vegetables. I wish I had more time to eat but couldn’t because so many questions were asked of me.”

TRAVELING WITH ARMED GUARDS

While he was very enthusiastic about his reception at the plant and during the seminar, Rapchak indicated the real excitement for him was the getting in and out of Iraq.

“The evening before the seminar I flew into Kuwait, arriving at my hotel by 11 p.m. I had to be up by 5 a.m. in order to take a taxi on the 1½-hour trip to the Iraqi border. I can’t say I really slept. I think I probably just rested on the bed for a while. The border opens at 8 a.m. and closes at 5 p.m. As there are not a lot of great hotels in the Basra area, I

10 YEARS AGO, WE DECIDED TO TAKE A UNIQUE APPROACH BY BECOMING A GLOBAL AGENT.

knew it was wise to be back across the border prior to its closing. At the border you clear your paperwork, which had all been prepared ahead of time. Thankfully Hindi met me there and assisted me. Then I sat in the back of the car with an armed guard in the front passenger seat and another riding shotgun in the back.

“Following the seminar, we had a plant tour, then I said my goodbyes to the plant management and was on my way. Now, after a long day I was off to Kuwait for an overnight to my next stop which was Istanbul. The only thing I wish was that I was able to sleep on the plane, but I couldn’t. I guess the good part is that it left me with time to prepare for my next appointment in Istanbul.”

As he recalled the visit to Iraq, which only really amounted to several hours, Rapchak said the main thing he remembered was being excited. “I really didn’t have any fear, it was just exciting to be there. Even waiting at the border there was no tension. Everyone was very relaxed and friendly. There were no jeeps with guns or anything threatening. As I looked around I saw other businesspeople like myself. I think I also felt a sense of sadness as I looked at the buildings, barbed wire and gloomy surroundings. But having said that, I can see that they’re making progress. Overall I felt very safe and came away with a much different feeling about what’s going on there vs. what we all see on CNN.”

Perhaps as proof that he means what he says, Rapchak indicated that as soon as Baghdad is declared safe enough to travel for business purposes, “I’ll be there.”

