



*Captain Jerold Schneider, posing on top of the walls of Abraham's house in the ancient city of Ur.*

I was hired by AirTran in May 2001, four months prior to 9/11. I was doing an LGA stand-up month when the twin towers fell, although I was home that day. My sister-in-law worked at one of the buildings that was crushed when the towers fell—she was coming in late that morning because of a new baby and was on the train when the towers were hit. On any other day she would have been in to work by then. Her son was going to stay at that daycare center at the bottom of the towers. Thankfully, they turned around and went home. Another sister-in-law was in Washington, D.C., at the time. My wife was flight-instructing out of the Aeroclub at Warner Robbins AFB and was in the air when the towers were hit. She couldn't get through to her sisters because the AFB lines were flooded. So, I was on the phone all morning tracking them down for her. Thankfully, they were all right. What a day.

I flew my regular route just a few days after the attacks. They flew us up the river just like they always do for 22; it was like God had taken a rectangular cookie cutter and just lifted out the center of the city, leaving only smoke and debris. And it smoked for a long time afterward.

I enlisted in the Army in 2003. I was in basic training (at age 32!) when we declared war. Because of my age and eyesight, I was unable to fly. Since I had driven trucks for UPS and FedEx during college and flight school, I became a truck driver, 88M. I was deployed from 2004 to 2005, based at Al Nasiriyah, Iraq, Tallil AB. I performed convoy missions; then we became a gun truck company, and I did convoy protective missions. Then I spent five months in an office, the least exciting part of my deployment.

On the edge of the Tallil AB, inside the outer perimeter wire, is the ancient city of Ur, which is the historical birthplace of Abraham, from the Bible. The battalion chaplain conducted tours in conjunction with the local tourist "expert." The

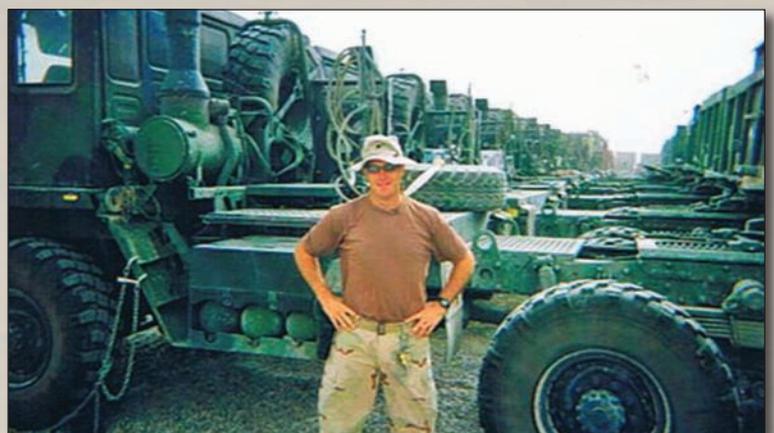


picture to the left is of me squatting atop one of the walls of Abraham's house during the tour. The picture of me on the cover (bottom, center) is while on a convoy mission, notice I am in "full battle rattle, locked and cocked," with my emergency magazine strapped to the butt of my rifle. We were on a bathroom break, and five minutes after that picture was taken, a large IED went off on a sister convoy half a mile away. The picture below is of me in the motor pool at Tallil. This is an early picture—notice the total lack of armor on the trucks. We had "drop-in" armor plates in the windows, which you can't see, as opposed to the partial up-armor kits we eventually got, which you can see in the convoy picture. The gun trucks we eventually received for our protective missions were up-armored from the factory (and air conditioned!), and we were thrilled. I was there during the scandal over the lack of armor on trucks. The unit I was attached to lost a soldier just prior to our arrival in country, and his parents called their senator and congressional representative, which started a big scandal that eventually snowballed into *the* scandal.

P.S.—The Company gave me a hard time when I came back in 2005. Many thanks to the union's military guy who helped me out. 🙏

## **Captain Jerold (Jerry) Schneider**

ATL 737



*Captain Jerold Schneider in the motor pool at Tallil. Notice the lack of armor on the trucks.*