

Muslim Pioneer...

He just keeps rollin' along

By Samuel Ayyub Bilal

If you wait for Henry Abdel Azeez Shabazz to thump his chest about his accomplishments, you'll wait forever.

Mr. Shabazz is one of the last men in the world to boast of his contributions to the spread of Al-Islam in America. Yet those contributions are there in the record and the heart of the World Community of Al-Islam in the West (WCIW) of which Mr. Shabazz is a member.

And what a fine member Mr. Shabazz is! He's always present on the job and always working—as though work is his first nature—at Masjid Elijah Muhammad on the South Side of Chicago.

"Well, I only really work about 10 hours a day," he said, trying to downplay remarks by others who note that he spends an average of 12 hours a day as head maintenance man whose duties involve the upkeep of the masjid and the adjacent Sister Clara Muhammad School complex.

That 12-hour day is repeated seven days per week "because I enjoy being there at the masjid and school—really enjoy being there," Mr. Shabazz said during a recent telephone interview by Bilalian News.

Mr. Shabazz's diligent work at Masjid Elijah Muhammad began almost one-quarter century ago, in November 1953, when he became a member of what then was a small but steadily growing Muslim community in Chicago.

Although he was the head of a family containing eight children, Henry A.A. Shabazz was a first-rate secretary of the Fruit of Islam (FOI) training unit in the Muslim community for 22 years until the FOI was disbanded in 1976.

As FOI secretary, Mr. Shabazz was in charge of all the brotherhood's records and especially concerned himself with the brother's attendance. "That meant I had to be at the mosque on time four days a week to keep attendance," he noted.

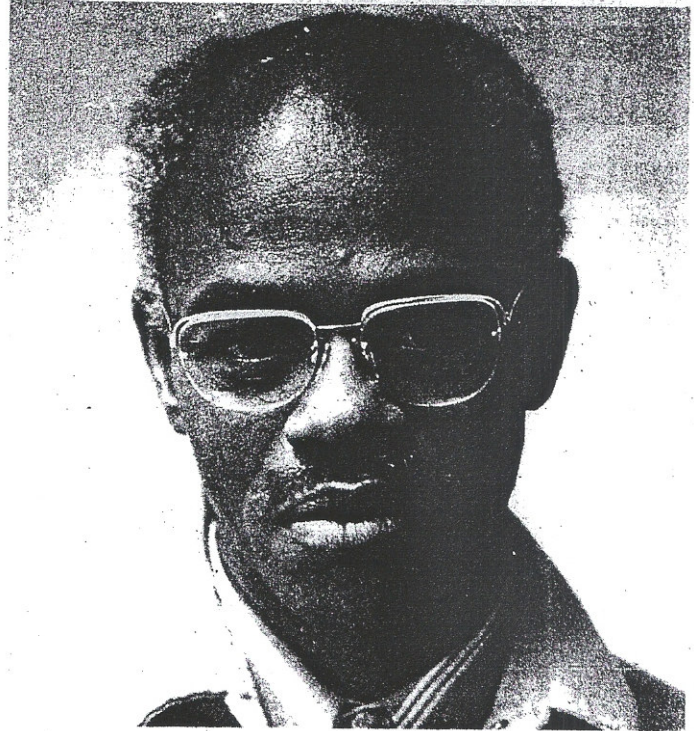
REWARD UNTO ITSELF

Mr. Shabazz also noted that one of the pleasures of working around the masjid and school is that he comes into contact with hundreds of visitors from all across the U.S. and around the world.

"And I feel that they feel like I would feel being from another area." Therefore he does whatever he can to help make visitors as well as other participants in the masjid-school activities feel comfortable and at home.

"I know that our visitors certainly will be glad to hear the truth coming from the Chief Emam," Mr. Shabazz said referring to WCIW leader Emam Wallace D. Muhammad.

Expanding his remarks about Emam Muhammad, Mr. Shabazz exulted that "it was the greatest blessing of my life to hear the truth that the Emam teaches. I had often heard his father, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, say that the Emam would one day be his helper" in



Henry Abdel Azeez Shabazz

Photo by Wali Akbar Muhammad

building the Muslim community in America.

Expressing his high hope for the WCIW future in America, Mr. Shabazz said with confidence that "it (that future) will be exactly what Emam Muhammad said it will be when he came into office, in February, 1975. He said that we, the World Community of Al-Islam, would remake the world, and that's exactly what we are doing!"

ONE OF MANY BLESSINGS

Mr. Shabazz noted that the quality of life in the WCIW has not only improved under Emam Muhammad's leadership, but WCIW members "feel much more peaceful and relaxed."

Because he has been in close contact with the WCIW brotherhood for 25 years, Bilalian News asked Mr. Shabazz to comment on the current quality of that brotherhood.

"We still have a good brotherhood...I can tell by their attendance at masjid meetings and at other affairs we have. And I can also tell by the high, brotherly spirit that they always show.

"Yes, brother, the community is really growing. It's growing because the Emam is teaching the plain truth and that fact makes the community grow," he declared.

Mr. Shabazz is a man who is forever bent towards self-improvement. He concentrates on developing and improving those skills which will enable him to help his family and the community. Therefore he is currently enrolled in a correspondence course for locksmith training. "Always, the practical man, he's putting his newly learned skills to work.

"But right now, most of my work with locks is on a non-commercial

basis," he noted, indicating that the very needy might be in line for some free, nearly expert locksmith service.

Mr. Shabazz came to Chicago from Fort Worth, Tex. in 1948. By November, 1953 he had made his way to the East 43rd Street location of Masjid Muhammad which was then known as Muhammad's Temple of Islam No. 2

THE FIRST TIME DID IT

"I'd heard a brother in a West Side cabinet shop talking about the temple," Mr. Shabazz recalled. He said that at the first meeting the fiery and eloquent Minister Lucius Bey was the main lecturer.

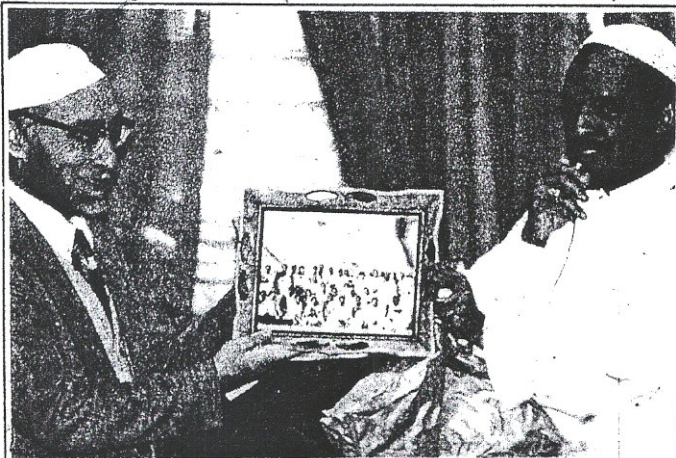
The master (Elijah Muhammad) was out of town. But he came back the next week. And I was very attracted to the way he taught from the Bible."

Mr. Shabazz joined the Muslim community a few weeks after his first visit to the 43rd Street Masjid, and one year later became secretary of the Fruit of Islam, a post he held for 24 years.

"I hardly ever was late, let alone being absent," he said proudly, when asked about his own enthusiasm during those days.

He noted that during a brief period in the 1960s he owned a small delicatessen on the West Side. "And I was late a few times then and missed a few meetings." But otherwise, he was always on time, always present and always working in the mighty cause of Islam in the West.

Mr. Shabazz laughs heartily when he points out that Emam Muhammad often implores him to cut back on his hours and get some help for his duties. He indicated that he wishes there were more work to do at the masjid where he loves to be



HISTORIC PHOTO of World Community of Al-Islam in the West members on recent Hajj is presented at Arafat by Emam Shakir A. Mahmoud (right) to Dr. Ahmad Sake of the Muslim World League of North America. WCIW leader Emam Wallace D. Muhammad is among the group shown on the photo presented by Emam Mahmoud who is resident Emam of Masjid Muhammad No. 11 in Boston where the photo was presented.

Photo by Raouf Muhammad Abdullah