

# MUHAMMAD ALI: THE

By Wali Akbar Muhammad



Ali poses for pictures with Zulu king Goodwill of South Africa (above) taken while the king was honeymooning in America.  
 Ali with friends, Brock Perers and Nancy Wilson in Los Angeles. After strenuous workout, Ali rests on couch in front of enormous four poster bed to watch the evening news. (center)

When Muhammad Ali fights this Friday night, one out of every two on the Earth will be watching. TV producers estimate the live viewing audience will exceed two billion, more than half the Earth's population.

It is easy to see why the popular boxer holds claim to being "most recognized person on Earth."

Bilalian News recently visited M. Ali at his training camp in Deer Lake, Penn. where he was preparing for the upcoming fight with Leon Spinks.

Following his morning rubdown, Ali sat in the mess hall and explained to 20 or more newsmen why he is considered the most recognized person on Earth. "Not boxer, not Negro, not American," he said, "but the most recognized person on Earth."

"You know why?" he quizzed. Because I put Allah and my religion first. After each fight, Allah is thanked on worldwide television.

"God, first," he told his listeners. "When you come in this place, notice how you see God's house first? That white building close to the road is a masjid.

"My cook has a house, many trainers have houses, I have a house. But god's house is first.

"This morning, when you followed me murmuring, didn't you have to stay out there 30 minutes while I was in there praying and reading the Holy Quran and studying scripture? Then I went running. God first!"

However, Muhammad Ali is known the world over as having done more for boxing than anyone else in the history of the sport. His lightning-like punches and flashy footwork, his equally swift mind and articulate tongue, his warm, compassionate and humanitarian feelings have all endeared him in the minds and hearts of countless members of all races, religions, creeds and national origins.

Wali Muhammad, Ali's assistant trainer, later outlined the daily training schedule.

"We get up around 4:30 or 5:00. Ali is the first one up. He rings the bell that means it's time for us to run. We wash up and go to prayer and then we run for about a half hour, 3 to 5 miles.

"Then we come back and have some hot tea with lemon and honey and lay him out on the table for a good physical rubdown. He goes through his calisthenics on the table. Then we come over to the kitchen for him to have breakfast and we sit around and talk until about nine, then he goes to lay down.

"He gets up about 1:30 or 2:00 for training and we train until about 4:00. We do a little of everything, hit the heavy bag, jump rope, and shadow box. There are times when we do nothing but spar in the ring for six or eight rounds. After that, he may be interviewed by newsmen in the dressing room.

"After the interviews, Mr. Louis Soria, a Cuban, and one of the best in the business puts him back on the table for another rubdown and more calisthenics. Then he takes a shower, talks to his fans and we may sit in the mess hall and talk about Islam or just lay around until 9:30 or 10:00.

"The average person doesn't know the sacrifice and hardness of training," Wali said, "until they come to the camp. All they see is the big fight, the big win, and after that the parties. But they don't know the sacrifice we have to make to get there."

When asked if he thinks Ali will quit after this fight, he says he hopes so. "I don't think he can go any farther in the fight game so I personally hope he will retire when he regains the title. I hope he retires with the championship and goes into a higher phase of life because I think he has still a greater life to live than as a fighter."

Ali has higher aspirations too. "After I'm through with boxing, what am I going to do? Go fishing? Or get on some t.v. show with Cosell talking about basketball? No! I'm going to deal with the world."

Ali's planned organization, the World Organization for Rights, Liberty and Dignity is called "World."

"I'm rounding up people from all over the world to start this world organization. We'll bring in people from all over to give bazaars and shows. The government will send them in on their own plane. We've got a lot of people helping us — all races.

"We'll do things like a documentary in a Russian hospital and talk to a typical nurse — how she lives and so forth. I've got permission to go back and film cab drivers, policemen and ordinary people on the streets of Russia.

"We'll try to erase the lies told about other people," Ali said. It's things like that that keep wars going on.

Speaking specifically about Russia, Muhammad Ali replied: "I didn't see any signs of crookedness or stealing, but I wouldn't live there. I'd rather be here. I couldn't have what I have in America in Russia. Every-