

Ramadan in
HOLLAND



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Cover: Despite the seeming clash of cultures, typified by Brynn Bruijn's photograph of a Pakistani immigrant in traditional dress passing a pop art mural in The Hague, Muslim communities have 20 to 30 years residence and familiarity in the Netherlands.

Back cover: Ducks dozing at the new Riyadh Zoo in Saudi Arabia. Photo: Lawrence Curtis

Opposite page: Embroidery-encrusted creations of Saudi designer Adnan Akbar on show in Washington DC. Photo: Robert Azzi

ARAMCO WORLD

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A Garden for Gibran

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By Larry Luxner

After more than five years of work, a chain of government approvals and a million dollars in donations, there's now a peaceful spot in Washington where visitors can recall Kahlil Gibran and his philosophy of brotherhood.



LUXNER



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Seattle's grey skies forced Yasser Seirawan to switch from surfing to chess when he was 12. Now, at 30, he has three US titles under his belt, and hopes to become the first American world champion since Bobby Fischer.



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Across mountains, deserts and savannahs, five French cyclists pedaled from Paris to Senegal for the sake of the peaceful sport they loved and the warm friendships they found along the 4000-mile journey.



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Fasting during the holy month of Ramadan unites Muslims everywhere. But in countries where they are a tiny minority, the ritual deprivation can be harder – and only one of the difficulties Muslims face.



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Dressing his sister's dolls, working all night with Karachi craftsmen, and showing his haute couture designs at the Palais de Chaillot were all stages in Adnan Akbar's career. Now he's setting his sights on the United States.



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A baboon at the embassy and seals in his pool are just part of the job for the director of Riyadh's growing young zoo. With strong city backing, the zoo inspires local affection as it aspires to international acclaim.



CLARK

A GARDEN FOR GIBRAN

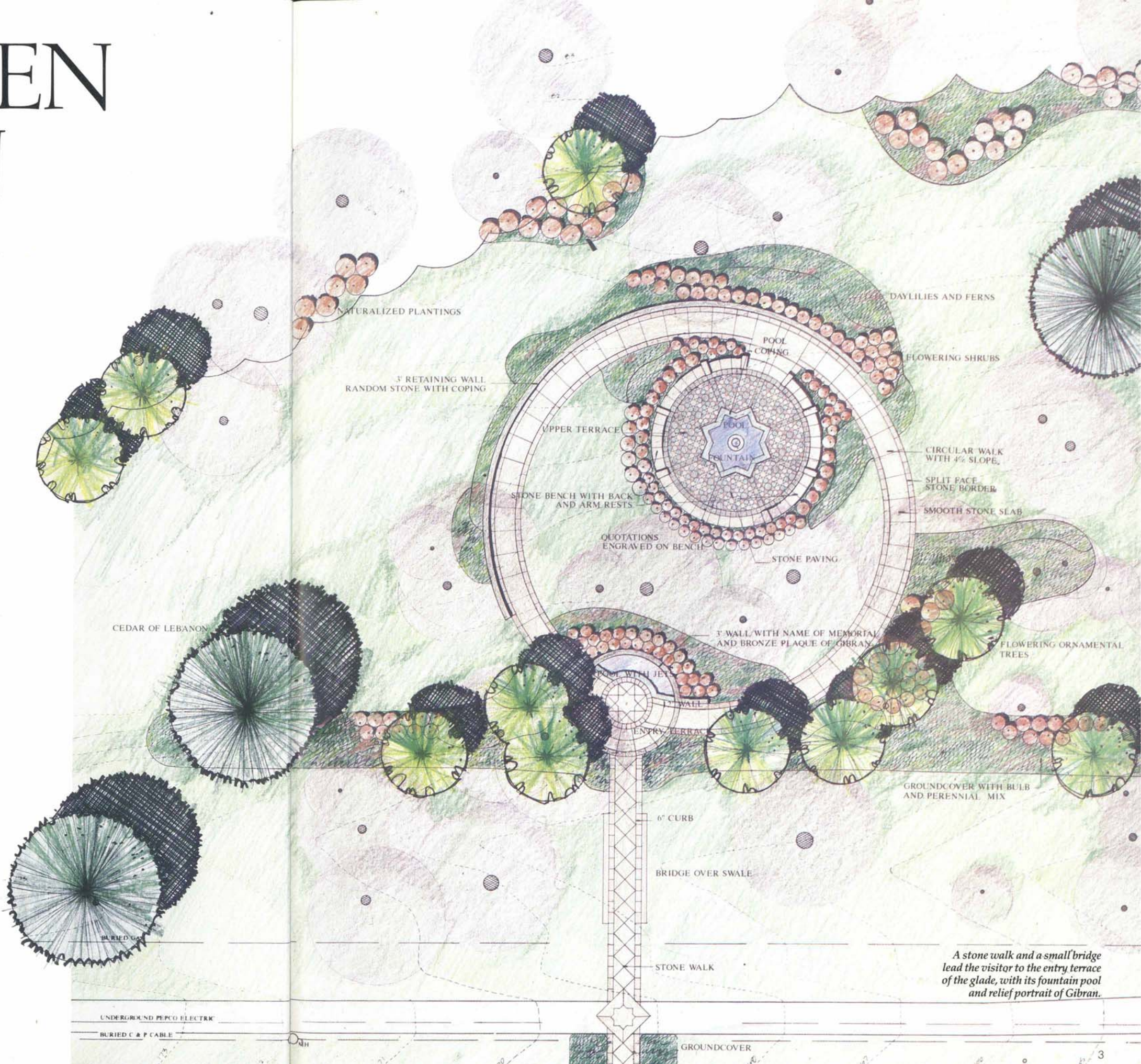
To be a good citizen, said Lebanese-born writer, artist and philosopher Kahlil Gibran to his fellow Arab-Americans, "is to stand before the towers of New York and Washington, Chicago and San Francisco, saying in your heart, 'I am the descendant of a people that built Damascus and Byblos, and Tyre and Sidon and Antioch, and now I am here to build with you.'"

On a rain-drenched afternoon last autumn, one of the cities he named remembered Gibran. In a ceremony at a wooded site off Massachusetts Avenue in northwest Washington, D.C., hundreds of Gibran's American admirers – from television comedian Flip Wilson to Congresswomen Mary Rose Oakar of Ohio – witnessed the symbolic planting of three nine-meter (30-foot) cedars of Lebanon on the spot where a meditation garden dedicated to the writer's memory would soon take shape.

The October 17 groundbreaking, presided over by United States Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan, marked the culmination of a five-year effort by the Kahlil Gibran Centennial Foundation to raise a million dollars to construct the garden. The non-profit group, with the help of its honorary chairman, former President Jimmy Carter, raised the money through private donations, fund-raising receptions and black-tie dinners in Atlanta, Canton, Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit, Miami, Orlando, Los Angeles and elsewhere across the United States. One event, at New York's Ukrainian Institute, featured an exhibition of Gibran's paintings; another, in Dallas, honored one-time Federal Aviation Administration director and Pan American World Airways president Najeeb Halaby.

Oilman Michel T. Halbouty, who was honored in Houston along with heart surgeon Michael DeBakey, another Texan of Lebanese descent, told the more than 500 people attending the fund-raising dinner there that Kahlil Gibran's essays, novels and paintings had been a source of personal inspiration to him for more than 60 years.

WRITTEN BY LARRY LUXNER
ILLUSTRATIONS COURTESY OF
HELLMUTH, OBATA & KASSABAUM



A stone walk and a small bridge lead the visitor to the entry terrace of the glade, with its fountain pool and relief portrait of Gibran.

"He was born in the shadows of the cedars of Lebanon, and no one before him or since has exhibited such a beautiful approach to life and its meaning," Halbouty said. "Gibran represented the soul of Lebanon. His writings reach the deepest recesses of the reader's emotional and spiritual awareness. He loved Lebanon with a passion matched only by his corresponding love for its people." (See *Aramco World*, July-August 1970).

Clearly, Gibran also loved his adopted country, the United States. A native of the Lebanese mountain village of Bisharri, he emigrated to Boston in 1895 with his mother, his half-brother and his two younger sisters when he was 12 years old. Two years later, he returned to Lebanon to study Arabic and Arabic literature, graduating from Beirut's Maronite Catholic *Madrasat al-Hikmah* (School of Wisdom).

Young Kahlil (the unconventional transliteration of his name that he preferred) returned to the United States in 1903 and except between 1908 and 1910, when he studied art in Paris, he lived and worked in Boston and New York for the remainder of his life. He wrote prolifically, at first primarily in Arabic, later in English, authoring more than a dozen books in all; most of them he also illustrated. Collections of Gibran's works have been translated into more than 50 languages.

In Gibran's last book, *The Wanderer*, published shortly before his death in 1931, he used simple yet beautiful parables to explain love, charity, aging and other themes — often couching his writing in the form of conversations between frogs, tree branches and blades of grass as well as between ordinary humans.

But Gibran is best-known for his 1923 book, *The Prophet*, now in its 109th printing, which has sold some eight million copies over the years. Quotes from *The Prophet* will adorn the upper terrace of the garden to be built in Gibran's memory, according to Sheryl Dekour Ameen. She founded the Kahlil Gibran Centennial Foundation in 1983, the 100th anniversary of the poet's birth (See *Aramco World*, March-April 1983). The garden will also have fountains, stone benches, and Islamic designs on granite, patterned after those found at the Beiteddin Palace in Lebanon.

Affixed to a fountain wall where the paved path enters the garden, a portrait of Gibran by sculptor Gordon Kray will gaze across the length of a pool to a bronze dove rising to fly from a waterspout.

"We're trying to fashion it into a meditation garden," Ameen told *Aramco World*. "Fountains have always symbolized the source of spirituality. We've really stressed

the ecumenical spirit of Kahlil Gibran's writings. It was important in determining our site that it lie within walking distance of both the Islamic Center and the National Cathedral. Gibran respected all religions."

Ameen and others involved in the project are Americans of Middle Eastern background who felt that the anniversary of Gibran's birth would be a wonderful opportunity to put a more human face on the Middle East. "I think it's important that, symbolically, there be a peaceful Lebanon to balance the present reality of a war-torn Lebanon," she said.

"As Americans, we also felt this would be a wonderful way to give something back to America. That is why, instead of putting up a statue, we wanted to build a garden. It is more in the spirit of Gibran."

Ameen, an art historian, led the push to win Congressional approval for the memorial — required for all such projects within the District of Columbia. The sponsorship of Senators George Mitchell of Maine and Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, then-Senator Dan Quayle of Indiana, and Representatives Chick Kazan of Texas and Mary Rose Oakar of Ohio also helped get the memorial approved — before passage of the 1986 Commemorative Works Act, which limited the number of memorials that can be erected on federal property.

After 1986, Ameen said, only monuments with a broad consensus appeal were likely to have been authorized, and Gibran's all-embracing humane values, although of historic and lasting value to America as a whole, might have been overshadowed by his ethnic background. Yet, she added, "he was very much influenced by American writers and the American political system. Many of his ideas about peace and brotherhood were based on his experiences in this country."

Keeping that in mind, the Ninety-eighth Congress passed Public Law 98-537 on October 19, 1984; it authorized the Kahlil Gibran memorial to be built on federal land, though with private funds. Three years later, the National Capital Memorial Committee approved an 8,000-square-meter (two-acre) site on Massachusetts Avenue, halfway up the hill which connects the city's principal mosque with the National Cathedral, and directly across from the British Embassy.

Finally, last June, the District of Columbia's Fine Arts Commission gave its okay to the memorial's design, conceived by the architectural and planning firm Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum. The firm's previous credits include the under-



GEORGE DICKIE

ground command center of the Saudi Arabian Air Force, the 600,000-square-meter (6,500,000-square-foot) King Saud University in Riyadh (See *Aramco World*, September-October 1985) and the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum.

"During our [Congressional] committee hearings, comedian Flip Wilson came to Washington at his own expense to testify on our behalf," Ameen said. "He's a big Gibran fan and has the entire text of *The Prophet* memorized."

The president of the Gibran Centennial Foundation, Washington consultant Bill Barody, said the federal government is not only donating the land, but has agreed to maintain the Gibran memorial after its completion.

Barody, a former president of the American Enterprise Institute for Public

Policy Research, said, "Checks have come in from individuals contributing just a few dollars, as well as in five-digit amounts from large corporations.

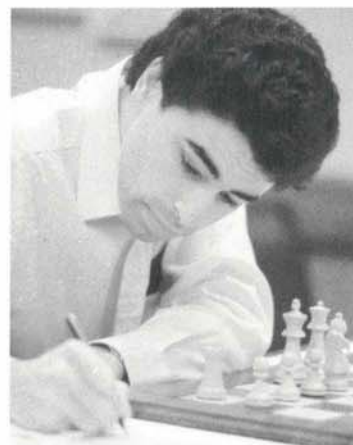
"We sent mailings to educational and information organizations, and to all the churches in the Arab-American community," he continued. "Yet Gibran is a universally known and loved poet, philosopher and artist, so we're getting pretty broad-based support, much broader than simply the Arab-American community."

"Our objective is not only to promote Gibran," Ameen pointed out, "but also the ideas behind his work: brotherhood and the common humanity of all people. We are happy to make this gift to America." ☉

Larry Luxner, a free-lance writer, contributes to *Aramco World* from his base in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

On a gently sloping site off Massachusetts Avenue, the meditation garden is screened by flowering trees and the tall cedars of Lebanon.

THE RIGHT MOVES



It was the Arabs who carried chess from India and Persia to the West in the seventh century. Today, Yasser Seirawan, a young Arab-American international grand master, evokes that heritage when he talks about his dream of capturing the world championship of chess – held, for all but three of the last 50 years, by players from Russia.

Born in Damascus in 1960, Yasser Seirawan came to America when his Syrian father won an engineering job with Boeing in Seattle. After his parents divorced, Seirawan and his mother roamed the United States before eventually settling in Virginia Beach, where young Yasser reveled in sun and surfing. Had the family not moved back to the overcast skies of Seattle, he might never have discovered chess. But there, one rainy day when Yasser was 12, a neighbor introduced him to the game which would change – would become – his life.

The following year, at age 13, Yasser won the Washington junior championship and started along the road to national ranking. On the way, he founded and coached his high-school chess team, complete with letterman's jackets and pep rallies. "We were a novelty," he told *Sports Illustrated* in 1981: "Three black guys, a white guy, a Chinese and a Syrian."

From high-school prodigy – "like encountering a Mozart," one teacher said of him – Seirawan moved up fast. In 1979 he won the world junior championship. In 1980 he defeated the formidable Victor Korchnoi, who was preparing to face Anatoly Karpov for the world title. Korchnoi invited Seirawan to train with him in Switzerland. Yasser was 19.

Seirawan himself defeated Karpov in a 1982 London tournament. He twice tied for the American open championship and, in 1987, won the title out-

right. In the United States championships, limited to the 16 top-ranked contenders, he tied for first in 1981 and was sole winner in 1986. That year, as reigning US chess champion, Seirawan made his first trip back to the Middle East since childhood. He played in the 27th Chess Olympiad in Dubai, stopping en route in Saudi Arabia to visit his father.

"Syrian-born, but quintessentially Yank," *Los Angeles Times* writer Dick Roraback described Yasser Seirawan in 1987. No American since Bobby Fischer in 1972 has won the world championship, but it is a title Seirawan aspires to. "Soviet masters are supported with trainers, coaches, and all kinds of perks; we Western grand masters have to fend for ourselves. We have to make a living," Seirawan told *Aramco World*. "You can't forget, when you're off competing, that the rent meter is ticking away at home." In Seattle, Yasser and his brother Daniel publish *Inside Chess*, a magazine whose international circulation has reached 6,500.

Last November Seirawan went into the 1989 US championships in Long Beach ranked second, with 2713 points. When it was over he had won his third title – this time in a three-way tie with former champion Roman Dzindzichashvili and 16th-ranked Stuart Rachels, the youngest player in the competition at age 20.

Yasser Seirawan is 30, but he's still making the right moves. This spring he will be a member of a 10-man US team facing the Soviet Union, England and the Scandinavians at the Chess Summit in Reykjavik, Iceland. At home, he's working to help make chess a part of Seattle's 1990 Goodwill Games. "Chess has given me a lot in life," Seirawan says. "I'm happy to share that with others." ♁

William Tracy is acting assistant editor of Aramco World.



To many villagers along a line from Algeria's Mediterranean coast south and west to Senegal on the Atlantic, Europeans in motor vehicles mean danger. I wanted to change that perception for the better. That line is the route of the annual Paris-Dakar automobile rally, in which competing cars, trucks and even motorcycles travel at speeds of more than 160 kilometers an hour (100 mph) on narrow country roads and village streets. The participants concentrate on speed, competitiveness and, beyond that, profit, for a victory means large advertising expenditures and increased sales in the following year.

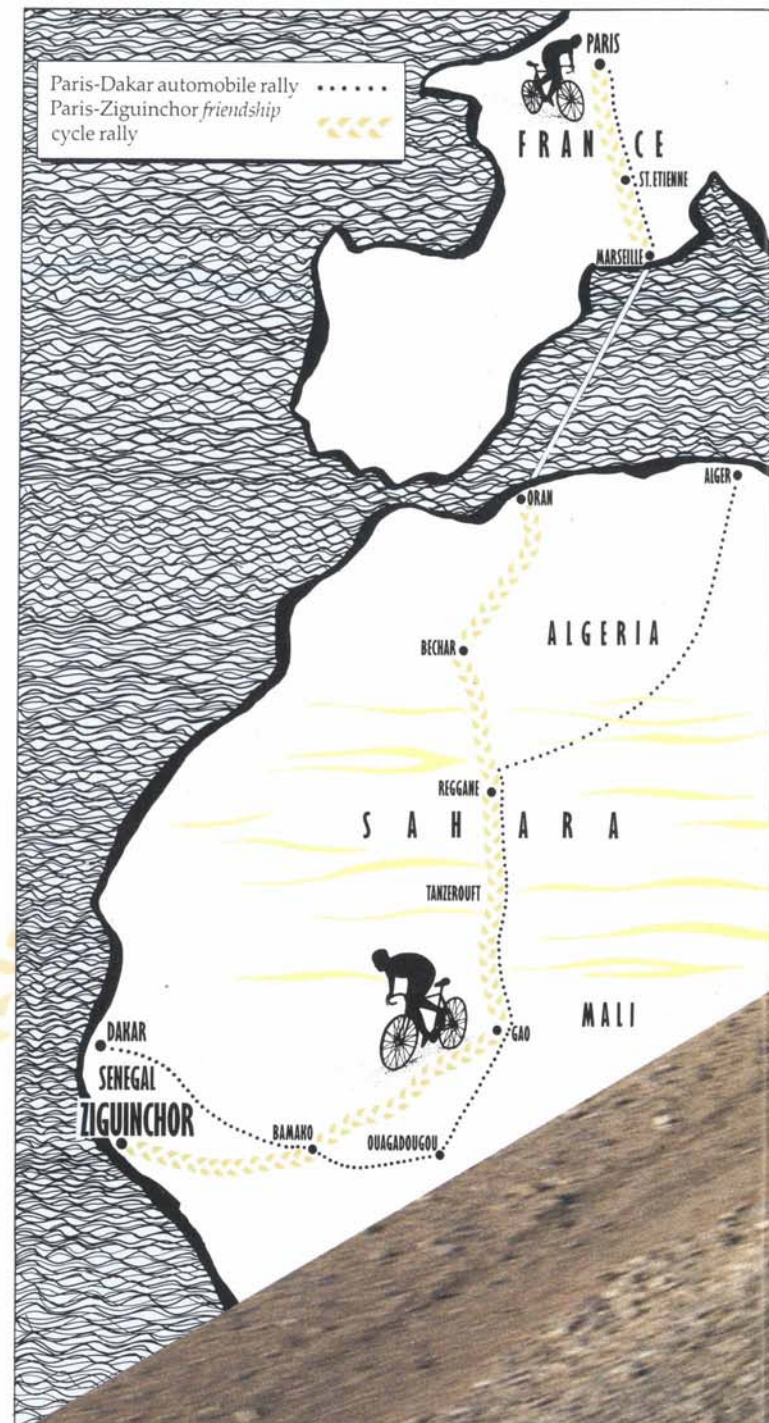
One French car manufacturer entered four cars in 1988, hired four racing drivers, two of them world-famous, and surrounded the entries with seven support vehicles and 62 mechanics. An effort like this can cost as much as \$500,000 per car, and little or none of the money is spent in the financially impoverished regions that the rally passes through.

On the contrary, each year the rally takes a considerable toll in local livestock unaccustomed to high-speed vehicles — but the 1988 rally claimed human lives as well: Six race participants and six innocent bystanders were killed during the 22 days of what *Time* called "one of the most disastrous sporting events ever conducted." Driver Juha Kankkunen took the victory for Porsche, but attempted to avoid the award ceremonies and later said he would be "somewhere else" when the next race was held.

Since there is so much more to the sport of rallying than the havoc and injuries of motor rallies like the Paris-Dakar run, and since I have considerable cycling experience all over Europe, I decided to organize a 6500-kilometer (4000-mile) bicycle excursion tracing the same route from Paris across France, across Algeria, the Sahara and Mali, to Senegal. It would be a *rallye de l'amitié*, a friendship rally, whose goal would be to show the residents along the route that the arrival of Europeans could be less of a traumatic experience and even a positive one.

I imagined that, for the 64 days that the trip would take, a group of five cyclists could pedal along silently, peacefully and leisurely, perhaps as ambassadors for the United Nations' International Fund for the Development of Physical Education and Sport, known by its French acronym FIDEPS. Traveling with a minimum of expensive and ostentatious support equipment, respecting the limits of time and silence, we might make friends and learn about the people and the regions we traveled through, passing out copies of FIDEPS' "International Charter of Sport for All" on the way.

WRITTEN BY CLAUDE ETÈVE
PHOTOGRAPHED BY XAVIER SALLET/FOVEA



PEDALING TO ZIGUINCHOR



Their faces covered against wind-blown sands, FIDEPS cyclists cross the Sahara.

I solicited help from a number of organizations that might be interested in the project, and I was surprised and delighted at the resounding response. FIDEPS provided us with technical assistance and advice, as well as with copies of their charter in French and Arabic for distribution along the route.

The project dovetailed with the intention of the town of St. Maur des Fosses, a suburb of Paris, to send a pair of four-wheel-drive ambulances to its sister-city of Ziguinchor, in Casamance Province in the southern part of Senegal. The two towns have been "twinning" for 22 years, and there have been various exchanges between them. Now the ambulances could serve our cycle rally as escort and emergency vehicles, carrying supplies and a four-man crew.

When it became obvious, after a year's work, that my dream project actually could become a reality, I had to find experienced long-distance cyclists for the trip. One we found was Jean Nouet, a totally blind telephone operator who had made many long cycle trips; at 51, he was our oldest participant. Monique Collet, his 'eyes,' Richard Tessler and photographer Xavier Sallet rounded out the riding team.

Escorted by the two ambulances, we left the Paris headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on September 30, 1988. The Friday-afternoon traffic jams hardly bothered us. I was seeing not the streets of the city flashing past but, in my mind's eye, the whole preparation for the expedition.

We were off at last, pedaling happily on shiny new touring bikes, with MBK mountain bikes in reserve for the sand, and speeding toward more tranquil southern roads. We covered the distance in five days, in high spirits and in good physical shape, arriving in Marseilles late at night, with lights flashing along the Canebière and the damp heat of the city clinging to our T-shirts. The port seemed to stretch out forever, but we finally spotted the white hull of the *Tassilli*, the huge ferryboat which was to take us to Oran, Algeria, early the next morning.

When we disembarked in Oran, a second and very different stage of our journey began. We discovered that the sun was our real enemy—at least until, later on, we encountered the wind. We had to get used to the heat, and almost suffocated during the first few kilometers leading up the Beni Chougron mountains. We covered much less distance than usual, and our water consumption rose amazingly.

We rode through magnificent scenery. There were mountains on both sides of the road of every imaginable shade of yellow ochre, red and brown, with perfectly rounded peaks standing out against the stark blue sky. I realized that we had to follow the rhythm of nature in such surroundings; it would be almost a sacrilege to think only of the distance which we could cover in a day.

Our arrival at the village of Youb for the night gave rise to a real celebration. Instantly, the main street was full of cheerful people surrounding us. Everyone competed to offer us tea, to invite us into their houses and to meet their families. It was very difficult, indeed, to decide where to spend the night, since every invitation was so warm and spontaneous. We drank the traditional glasses of tea with our hosts, shared a meal, and chatted late into the night. Hospitality is no empty word in Algeria; it is a sacred duty to entertain travelers and passing strangers, and this tradition, lost among us Europeans, links people more closely together.

After we passed through Saida, the road started to rise, seeming to disappear into the sky. We were coming to the high plateau, a vast expanse of open country, with the mountains of the Saharan Atlas visible in the far distance. The wind whistled in our ears and blew in our faces. Bent over our handlebars, we struggled uphill, panting with the effort, at times in a tight group, sometimes one by one. This was our first encounter with the sirocco, the fierce south wind sweeping the empty plains.

The next day, upon leaving Ain Sefra, the wind got up at the same time we did, and I wondered if we could prevail against

it. But we did! We even got used to it. Our efforts became slower and steadier as we geared the bikes down and stopped longer to rest in the villages, and at midday. We continued through Beni Ounif and Bechar, meeting everywhere the same warm welcome and the same broad smiles. The farther south we went, in fact, the more the people seemed to enjoy our passage. When we explained the purpose of our journey we were gently encouraged, and given advice. We discussed cycling, sport in general, and often travel, and the people eagerly read the FIDEPS charter, written in elegant Arabic calligraphy.

When I leaned my bike against a rock, and sat down at the top of the mountain pass overlooking Taghit, I was struck with the same awe as in 1984, when I first came this way by automobile. Below lay a verdant oasis, with the square cubes of village houses rising behind it, against the overpowering rampart formed by the pale sand of the Great Western Dunes. Whooping with joy, I plunged down the slope, followed by my companions, to the village of Barbio, next to Taghit, where a friend who had welcomed me like a brother four years before was waiting in his roomy house with rammed-earth walls. We stayed for two days, dividing our time among eating, sleeping and visiting other families, totally captivated by the friendliness of village life. But we had to press on, and so our caravan got under way once again.

An ambulance—gift from a Parisian suburb to the Senegalese city of Ziguinchor—carried supplies for FIDEPS cyclists, above right, while a well at Kerzaz in Algeria, below right, provides welcome refreshment.

Overleaf: The downhill run from the Saharan Atlas into the Algerian town of Taghit.

A hazard sign in Algeria.



We climbed up onto the Tademaït Plateau to find the wind still against us. Ahead of us the horizon darkened, and suddenly we found ourselves amid a swarm of locusts. Thousands of them had settled on the road, and thousands more were drifting on the wind. They beat against our bodies and got caught in the spokes of our bicycle wheels, forcing us to slow down before reaching Kerzaz. The next morning we were awakened by the hiss of rain; on the wet road the locusts formed a thick squishy carpet over which we had to ride.

We were pressing on toward Adrar, where the Tanezrouft, often called the most fearsome desert in the world, began. Here the farm road ended, and we would be following a desert trail. But for the moment we were flying along: The wind had at last changed direction, and was at our backs. The kilometers ticked by; we were drunk with speed, and to our surprise the ambulances were left far behind. As night fell we recovered our senses and our support crew. We had covered 200 kilometers (124 miles) in one day!

At last we came to the long-feared start of the desert trail, but the mountain bikes seemed well able to cope with the surface of pebbly sand. We took a day off at Reggane, to service our bikes and prepare them for the desert. The Algerian authorities checked our equipment thoroughly to make sure we could cope with the journey ahead. They make sure that no one goes into the Tanezrouft unless they are properly equipped.

The Great Dunes were at first perfectly flat. There was nothing to see except the triangular guide posts and the solar-powered beacons which had been placed every five or 10 kilometers (three to six miles). They mark the 640 kilometers (400 miles) between Reggane and Bordj Moktar on the border with Mali.

We covered 80 kilometers (49 miles) a day. The trucks met us every 20 kilometers (12 miles) to give us water—an absolute necessity to avoid dehydration. We pedaled on, changing our rhythm to the dictates of the desert, avoiding all unnecessary effort in the great heat. We rode for four hours in the morning, and then sheltered from the sun until it started to sink at the end of the day, continuing then for another three hours or so. Only night brought refreshment, as we lay on the warm sand.

In mid-desert, the back axle of one of the ambulances began emitting sinister groans, and was no longer engaging the gears. Repairing it required five hours of back-breaking work, and we would never have managed without the aid of a talented Targui who passed our way. When he left us, our friend from the desert refused all payment, saying only, "If you meet someone in trouble tomorrow, give

him a hand in turn."

When we reached the Algerian border post at Bordj Moktar, we calculated that we had covered 2150 kilometers (1336 miles) since leaving Oran. As we crossed into Mali, the trail was no longer as well signposted, and we had to keep a close lookout for the guideposts. The scenery changed too; the first tufts of grass appeared in the dry river valleys. The rock colors became darker, with black and deep-violet schists showing in the gently rising hills. The trail wandered off in a lengthy detour, but we kept to our direction, going up and down, profiting from the spurt of each descent to get at least half way up the next hill. Each rider chose his own path, zig-zagging between the natural obstacles.

Eventually we rejoined the trail. It led us straight to a green oasis, with acacia and balanite trees crowded together in the wide bed of a wadi. All around lay the fertile plain in which camels, sheep, and goats were grazing. The Tuareg were not far off.

As we approached Tessalit, the Mali border post, 160 kilometers (100 miles) south of its Algerian counterpart, there rose in front of us a vast mountain range, the Adrar of Iforas. It concealed the village from us until we were almost upon it. On behalf of a French charity we had brought flour and special protein-enriched biscuits for the children of Tessalit. The town's Tuareg inhabitants explained their problems with great dignity, describing how they were trying to maintain their culture and their way of life, and find a compromise between the nomadic and the sedentary life.

For the first time in many years the winter rains had been abundant, and everyone was cheerful. But the run-off had carved gullies in the soil in the Tilemsi valley, and washed away much of the trail we had planned to follow to Gao.



Our solution was to pass through the upper Tilemsi valley, parallel to the main trail. For this we would need a guide with perfect knowledge of the terrain, and we found Assalami. He knew each small hill and every path, and was much respected throughout the valley. We followed narrow camel paths from camp to camp, like the nomads, and at midday and in the evenings the doctor in our support crew was often asked to treat a child, give a painkiller to an old man, or distribute some preventive medicine.

This year, in particular, the grass was high and lush. The pastures were vast; it was a long time since the flocks and herds had had so much to eat. As for us, we fell fast asleep in the evenings as soon as we had eaten dinner. The fatigue of the journey was beginning to tell, and some of us began to suffer from the stomach upsets that are very common here. We did our best to keep to the daily quota of kilometers in spite of the heat, which grew daily more oppressive. We had been off-road for 20 days.

Finally, after a terrible struggle through patches of soft sand, we saw, from the summit of the last dune, the first houses of Gao. The odometer on my bike read 3740 kilometers (2324 miles) – and we were one day ahead of schedule.

The desert ends at Gao, and sub-Saharan Africa begins. The town lies on the northern bank of the Niger River, crowded with people. Many different races rub shoulders here. For us, it meant a return to surfaced roads. Our high-pressure tires hummed along, and we often managed speeds of 40 kilometers an hour (25 mph). On the trail, with our mountain bikes, we had averaged 15 kilometers an hour (nine mph).

The savannah through which we now cycled was studded with bushes, and the earth was red: This was the Sahel. This year, the wells were more numerous, and contained more water; great herds of cows with lyre-shaped horns gathered around them under the vigilant eyes of the Peul herdsmen.

That night we stopped at the village of Gossi. The hour was late, but the village children clustered around us, staring at the bikes with huge admiring eyes. They were curious about everything, and asked endless questions about our journey and about France and its snow-covered mountains. Some brought their school notebooks and proudly showed us their work.

Our daily stages became longer, but there was still no question of cycling between noon and 4:00 p.m. Nothing moved in the stifling heat. The stomach bug we were suffering from made progress slow. Finally we reached Mopti on the banks of the Bani River, one of the larger tributaries of the Niger. It is centered on an impressive mosque, with flourishing businesses, government buildings, and houses clustered around it. There is a river port, and the marketplace is full of colorful booths, where craftsmen, peasants, and fishermen come to sell the fruits of their labors.

For us Mopti represented two days of comfortable rest – with a chance to take showers! We explored the town and visited fishing villages on the other side of the Bani in canoes, floating gently down the river in the light of the setting sun.

Cheerfully we took to the road again. Villages and towns succeeded each other en route, and there was a continual flow of people on foot; mainly women carrying

the total isolation of such towns as Kita and Kayes en route. It was full of women traders, busy buying melons, cola nuts and custard apples for almost nothing at each stop, to be sold later in Senegal. Every corner of the train was crammed with boxes and sacks, but everyone was cheerful and friendly, and in spite of getting very little sleep we thoroughly enjoyed our 24-hour journey.

The train crossed the savannah, which was brightly lit at intervals, all through the night, by huge bush fires sometimes uncomfortably close to the track.

At last we arrived at Tambacounda – ahead of schedule! As our arrival at Ziguinchor was planned for December 4, we decided to take a few days off and visit Medina Gounass, about 90 kilometers (56 miles) from Tambacounda and not on our direct route. Medina Gounass is a holy city, and its life is organized around the calls to prayer. We were most hospitably received, and the local authorities lent us a large house in which to stay.

The last part of the journey lay along the picturesque road across the southern Senegalese province of Casamance. The road surface, in many places, was crushed shell, and was a pleasure to cycle along. Here began the lush green jungle with huge baobabs and palms on either side of the road, and thousands of multicolored birds in the branches, as well as the occasional monkey.

After a final night in the bush, camping near the village of Anisse, we pushed on to our ultimate destination on the banks of the Casamance river. Ten kilometers (six miles) from Ziguinchor we were met by 20 fellow cyclists from our twin town's cycling club. *Le Soleil*, Senegal's largest daily newspaper, had announced our arrival, and we were greeted like heroes. Crowds gathered all along the road, clapping and shouting "Vive St. Maur!"

At City Hall, the mayor, the council and all of Ziguinchor's important citizens were awaiting us. We had to struggle through a huge crowd to reach them as drums pounded and everyone sang. Each of us was presented with a bunch of flowers by a little girl, and we in turn presented the mayor with the keys to the two ambulances. We had brought them a long way, and the route had been far from easy – but suddenly it all seemed worthwhile. 🌍

Claude Etève is president of Cyclafrique Sport, an association he founded to assist and promote sports in Africa. His account was translated by Rosalind Mazzawi.

Ramadan in HOLLAND

WRITTEN BY
HILARY KEATINGE
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
BRYNN BRUIJN

The Netherlands is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, with an estimated 14.6 million inhabitants in an area slightly larger than Massachusetts and Connecticut combined. The vast majority – 97 percent – are ethnic Dutch and Christian, with generally more Protestants in the north of the country and more Roman Catholics in the south.

The Netherlands' Muslim community is estimated to number about 400,000 people, most of them originally "guest workers" from Turkey and Morocco. Smaller numbers came from Indonesia and Suriname, countries with former colonial connections to Holland, and from Pakistan. There are also those who have newly embraced Islam – mostly Dutch women who have married Muslims – as well as the so-called "second generation": Dutch-born children of Muslim immigrants.

Muslims in Holland embrace on the feast day of 'Id al-Fitr as Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting, ends.





It is spring and Holland's fields are a riot of color as yellow daffodils give way to the blue of hyacinths and the rainbow fields of tulips. Buses roll in from all over Europe, and the tourists they carry point and admire, take photographs and enjoy the famous bulb season; bulb growers sell garlands and take orders for the fall.

In a converted house on a busy shopping street in the Dutch capital, The Hague, an activity of a different kind is under way. The leaders of the city's Muslim community are preparing for the holy month of Ramadan. Their flock is scattered and their environment — Christian in its assumptions, secular in its orientation — is no easy one for a month of fasting and prayer. The community office prepares information packets, the teachers work on explanations of dogma and ritual.

Fasting during Ramadan is one of the five central obligations, or "pillars," of Islam. For 29 or 30 consecutive days, no food or drink may pass the lips of the faithful from dawn to sunset. Many hours each night are devoted to prayer. And throughout the month, believers feel a spirit of tolerance, of gentleness and of unity that transcends regional or sectarian differences.

"From dawn to sunset..." — the words take on heightened meaning — and added complication — as the table of daylight hours in northern Europe is studied. The clocks will be set forward an hour in March as daylight saving time begins, and each day brings another four or five minutes of additional daylight. This year, the lunar month of



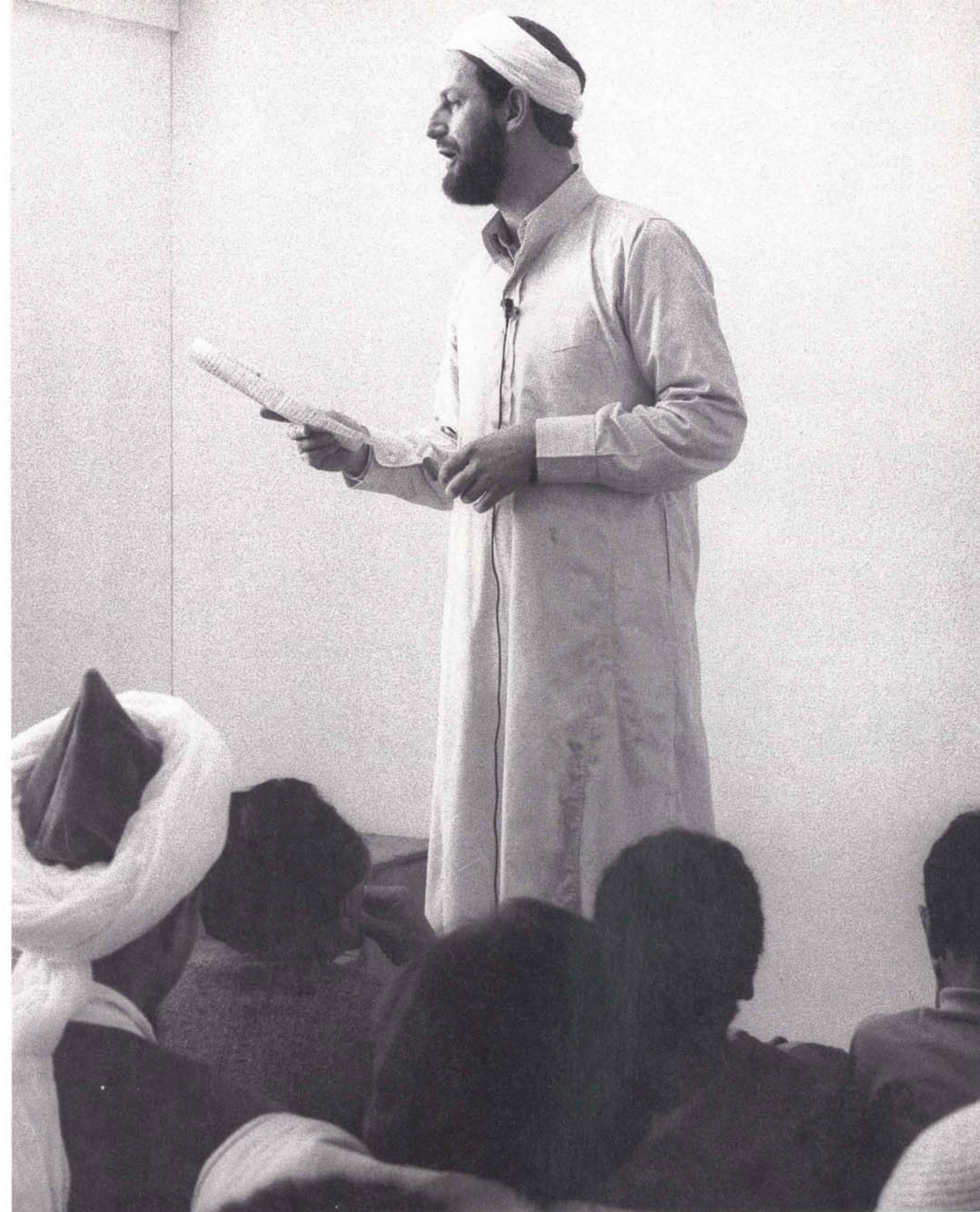
A Muslim immigrant in traditional Pakistani dress passes a mural on her way to class in The Hague.

Ramadan will begin in the last days of March, and by the end of the holy month the days will average 14 hours in length — a long time to go without food or drink or, for smokers, even a cigarette. Community leaders distribute tables of all the sunrise, sunset and prayer times to the faithful. Notices are posted in factories and workplaces asking non-Muslim employers and workers for their cooperation and their respect for those keeping the fast.

The Dutch have a well-earned reputation for tolerance of the beliefs of others, but, as elsewhere, tolerance comes easier when times are good. Most of the country's Muslim population came to Holland, from all across the Muslim world — Morocco to Java — in the boom times of the 1960s and 1970s, and as the majority of immigrants represented the economically depressed and illiterate classes of their native lands they took the unskilled or semi-skilled jobs, or the dirty or dangerous jobs, that the Dutch disdained. Now, with the economy slow and undergoing change, the edges of tolerance have rubbed a bit thin. Competition for jobs is fierce in the traditional fields of industry, and modern technology is pushing out the old labor-intensive practices in the shipyards and heavy industrial plants. Meanwhile, the 12 countries of the European Common Market are gearing up for sweeping changes in 1992, when Europe becomes effectively one country, in economic terms. Dutch industries — even such tradition-bound ones as the cheese industry — are consolidating and modernizing. Those processes have made "labor-intensive" an unwelcome, outmoded concept, almost a dirty word. These days, skilled operators in high-tech surroundings operate electronic panels, and large groups of unskilled — and unemployable — workers draw social security payments or undergo retraining programs.

The days of hiring non-Dutch-speaking, often illiterate guest workers from overseas farms or villages — workers without many opportunities even in their industrializing homelands — are over.

Today's Muslim communities in the Netherlands consist largely of these workers, who now have 20 or 30 years of residence and familiarity in Holland. They consist also of the younger generation, often born and bred in the Netherlands and with little knowledge of their parents' home country, and no ties abroad. These groups are leavened by Dutch converts — men and women who have embraced the religion of Islam. Each in their separate ways, all these people are facing great challenges, and a greater need than ever before to be united and organized.



Imam Abdulwahid van Bommel, a Dutchman who adopted Islam, speaks to Muslim immigrants at ceremonies marking the end of Ramadan.



Not always understood
in their new country,
these Muslim students
at Leiden University
attract curious glances.

Allahu akbar.... God is most great....

A family gathers for prayer. It is just after five a.m. on a morning in the first week of Ramadan.

Naima is the eldest daughter, a young woman now. She has lived in Holland since she was four, but she still remembers some of the difficulties of her early days in her new country: her feeling of being "different," the strangeness of the language, the frustration of not being able to make her four-year-old presence understood at school. But that time didn't last long. In a year, she was chattering in Dutch with her classmates, and now feels herself quite at home. With her family, she visits her old home in North Africa every few years, but Naima knows she couldn't be happy there. The old women in the village

look at her and ask, "Why aren't you married yet, girl?"

How can she explain to them, who have rarely left the confines of their village, that in industrialized, urban Europe marriage is not early or automatic, that women have a chance for self-fulfilment along quite different lines from that of their village sisters? For it is only the customs and traditions of Naima's village past that she has moved beyond, not the fundamental tenets of her religious faith.

On Saturdays Naima attends Arabic classes at the Islamic Center, learning to read and understand the Qur'an. She may not cover her head during the working day, but she believes it is a matter of convenience, not a rejection of the principle of modesty. Naima has been through the

Learning to become
"Dutch," Muslim
immigrants attend
language classes in
The Hague.



Dutch educational system and puts in long days as a professional social worker. Most of her colleagues and friends are Dutch, and in the first days of each new Ramadan they often forget and offer her the customary coffees and slices of birthday cakes in the office. Naima finds this the hardest time, but she soon falls into the changed routine of the month of daytime fasting and busies herself until the workday is over, putting thoughts of eating aside. The bus ride home seems longer than usual: She was up before dawn for her last meal, and she has trouble keeping her eyes open.

The house is quiet when she enters, an oasis from the

bustle of her life outside, and she rests a while before helping prepare the family meal, to be served after sundown. It would be good to join with other families to break the day's fast, but their Muslim friends don't live nearby. Naima's family is close, and this month of joint fasting and prayer builds a bond of togetherness and peace which she feels is often lost in the Western world, where families sometimes become too busy to eat together or even live together.

For the future, Naima hopes to find a good Muslim husband, and envisions no unsurmountable problems in being a modern woman and a religious wife and mother.



Abida and
Omar Kabbaj hungrily
eye sweets that will be
eaten at festivities
marking the end of
Ramadan.

Subhanak Allahumma... Glory be to Thee, my God...

In the classroom, Suad and her co-teacher lead the children in their midday prayer. The rows of bowed heads represent a spectrum of origins and nationalities – Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, Pakistani, Dutch – now together in this, the first Islamic school in the Netherlands.

The school is in a neighborhood of old Rotterdam where many houses are being rebuilt and renovated as homes for some of the foreign workers who live and work near the great port, in the shipyards and on the wharves. It took some time for local government officials – and for the Muslim community itself – to realize that many of these foreigners were by no means as temporary as the term “guest workers” implied: Men here today, when needed, and gone conveniently tomorrow. Many of them, rather, have been in the Netherlands much of their working lives; their families are with them, as the immigration laws of the time permitted, and they are here to stay. The sooner attitudes change, and the long-term needs of this new class of citizen are recognized and respected, the fewer problems there will be in the future. Holland is as flexible and innovative as any European country, but even here it required a great deal of perseverance, pressure, discussion and argument to get a project like this Islamic school under way.

The school still lives somewhat uneasily among its Dutch neighbors: Muslim teachers are difficult to find and the authorities monitor the academic program with special diligence, watching for transgressions of the state guidelines or deviations from the approved curriculum.

That said, the life of the school fairly hums as you walk through the door. The classrooms are strung with colorful art; an exhibition in the corridor illustrates the principles of Islam. The seven-year-olds are working on their Dutch pronunciation. The challenge for the teaching team is to educate Holland's first generation of Dutch Muslims. It has started with these youngsters.

The more educated among the immigrant parents made the initial moves to establish the Islamic school. There are still

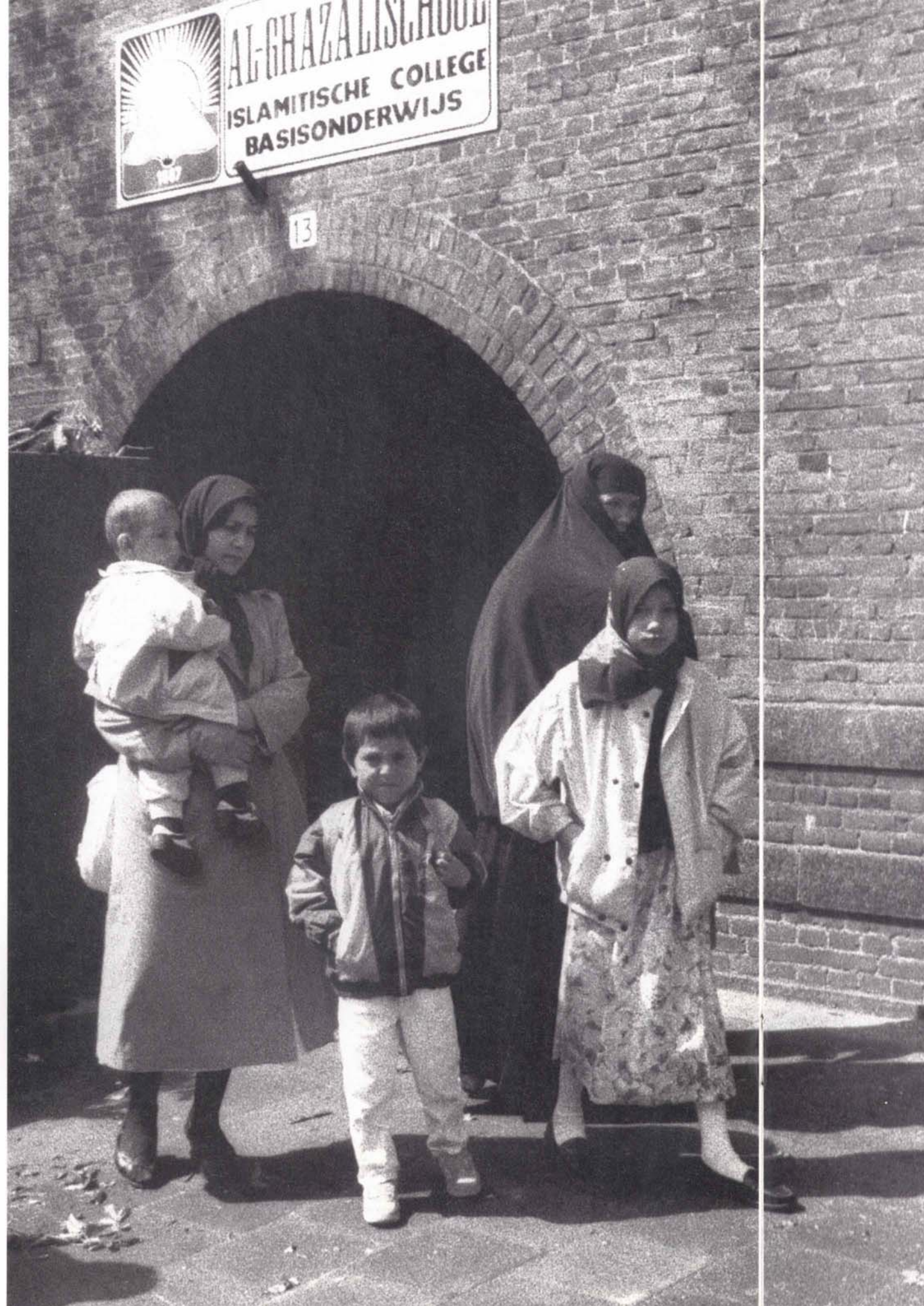
others, from the most conservative rural backgrounds, who look on this innovation with suspicion. Some of the most traditional fathers can't understand the need for their daughters to learn, and they're watchful of school requests that their wives help the over-stretched classroom staff. Some mothers, too, unschooled themselves, are skeptical; one group of mothers watches as their young children play with plastic bricks. “Can this be learning?” they wonder. The school is teaching two generations.

Young children are not required to take full part in the Ramadan fast, though many of the older pupils fast with their parents on weekends. At the school, several classes have “Ramadan boxes” into which the little ones drop sweets and other goodies daily – if somewhat reluctantly – as a small sacrifice and a symbol of this special time. When the holy month ends with a holiday and gifts, the children will break open the box and share the treasures.



At Al-Ghazali Islamic School, gifts are given to mark the end of the Muslim month of Ramadan.

Muslim mothers collect their children from the Al-Ghazali Islamic School in Rotterdam – the first of its kind in the Netherlands.





Omar Kabbaj prays
with his father
Abdellatif before
breaking the daily
Ramadan fast with
dates and water.

...wa bihamdika ...and praise be unto Thee.

At the mosque, a small group of students joins the men for 'asr, the late afternoon prayers. The mosque, like the one built in Medina by the Prophet Muhammad has no minaret from which to call believers: It's a converted Dutch row-house just off a main shopping street. This evening there is barely enough room for all those gathering to pray.

Haili is studying Dutch at a local language school on a partial scholarship from the government. He arrived in the Netherlands early this year, and without a knowledge of the language he has no hope of finding a job, even though he has a university degree from his own country.

His wife and her family have lived here for years; it is on the strength of her residence permit that he is allowed to work in Holland. Under the new regulations only immediate family members of residents can obtain working visas.

While Haili is going to school, he and his wife live in a tiny, damp upstairs apartment — all they can afford for the moment. Haili is ambitious, and once he has conquered the language he hopes to get a job in a bank or insurance office during the day and to take up further studies in the evening.

This is his first Ramadan in Europe. While he is accustomed to fasting, and given that in Holland, there is no southern heat to build up a thirst, he does find the many distractions on the streets new and testing, in a way he was never tested at home.

His wife is happy living here, and as a married couple living apart from her family they enjoy the freedom to follow their religious beliefs in their own way. They will not become totally Dutch, but they look to their future in Western Europe with confidence.

Abdil, another of the students at 'asr prayers, is studying

business management and economics. He has lived in the Netherlands long enough to have come to a kind of identity crisis. He knows he is not completely accepted by his Dutch friends. The thin wall of difference grows just a bit thicker and higher during Ramadan, when he declines the usual party invitations and is more reserved in his social behavior. Abdil feels there is a kind of embarrassment among his cheerfully secular Dutch friends. He is doing something which they grudgingly respect, yet can't fully comprehend. He, on the other hand, thinks it sad that many young people his age in Holland seem to have abandoned their religious beliefs for the idols of the street and the disco. They act tolerant, he admits, but for all their worldliness, he feels there is still a narrowness of understanding in them, a fear of the unknown, even a vestige of bigotry.

And what of Abdil's own people? His parents have adjusted well, over the years, to their different way of life in the Netherlands, and they welcome both his male and female friends to the house. But it is better not to walk in the neighborhood of his home in a mixed group. Many of his countrymen object to casual friendships between unattached men and women.

It becomes even more difficult for Abdil when his family visit their homeland every few years. There, for him, the gap has become almost unbridgeable. Abdil feels he is a stranger. People can't understand his way of life, or even share his sense of humor. To his credit, he is frank and open about these issues. Abdil has a strength of character and spirit, and a single-minded self-respect, that may make him an example to follow and admire among his transitional generation of European Muslims.

...wa tabaraka ismuka Hallowed is Thy name,

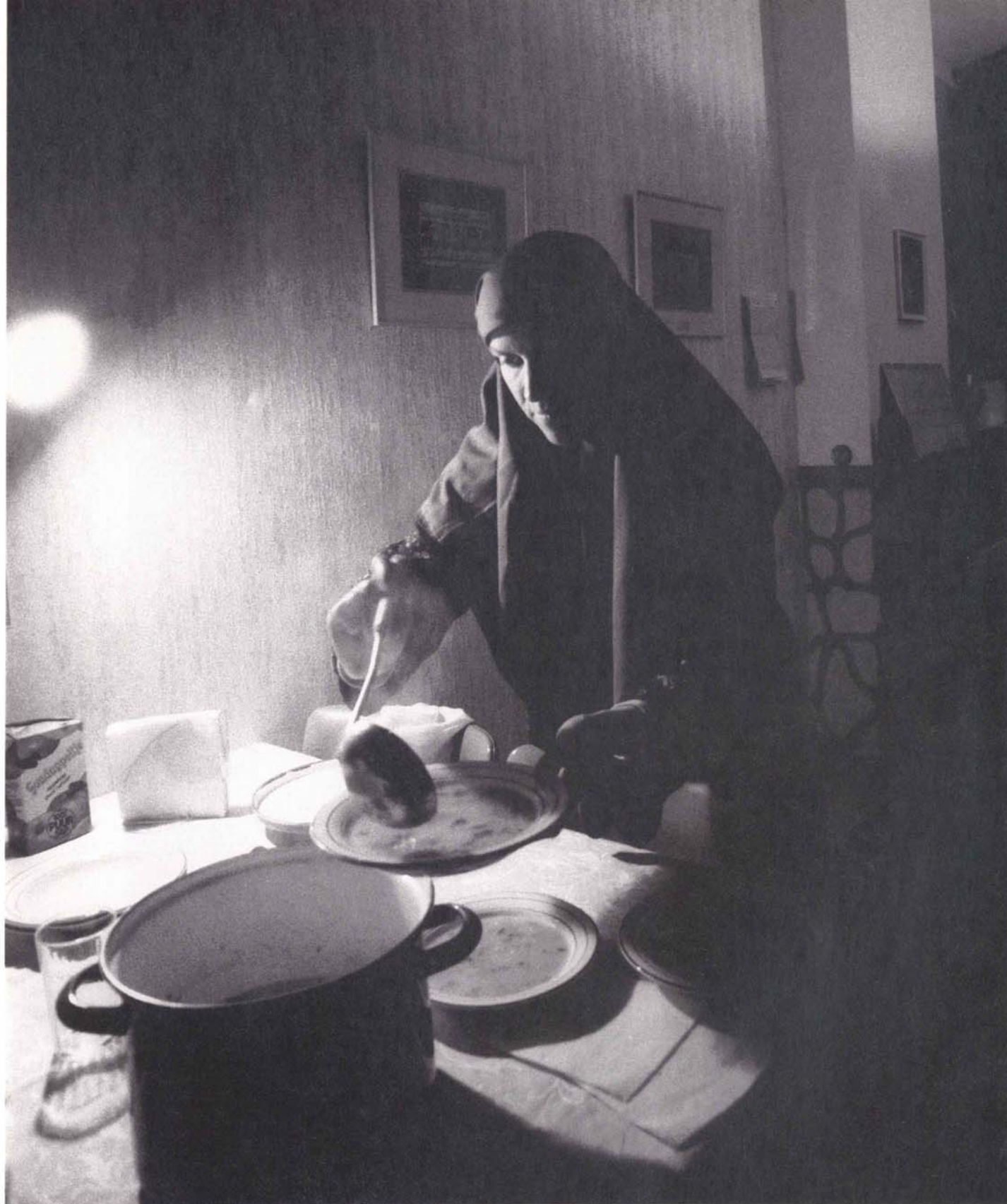


Muslim mothers, new to the Dutch system, find that participation in school fetes can be fun.

Two children are woken gently from their nap. Rubbing their eyes, they wash and prepare to break the fast with their parents. The man and boy stand together; behind them, their hair covered, the woman and the girl. There is a hush, a very serene calm in the room. The clock moves towards *maghrib*, the prayer after sunset. The only sound is a distant church bell ringing.



A young Muslim girl inhales amber, a traditional gesture marking the end of Ramadan and beginning of 'Id festivities.



Suad Kabbaj-Van Domburg, a Dutch woman married to a Muslim, ladles out soup for her family to break their dawn-to-dusk fast.

...wa ta'ala jadduka ...exalted is Thy majesty,

Three cultures compete for space in this room. The inevitable Dutch potted plants brighten the net-curtained front window; the ornamental North African lamp evokes a different clime, and, spread across the carpet, prayer mats point to far-distant Makkah.

The family gather around the low table to break their fast with dates, then rise to pray again. The mother moves to the kitchen to put the finishing touches to the main course, a Dutch housewife's adaptation of a North African recipe. Her cooking is not exactly like her mother-in-law's.

All the ingredients are available at a nearby market—one so colorful, so international, it could be anywhere in the world. Stalls selling Turkish and Moroccan spices and sweetmeats bracket a Dutch one offering raw herring and smoked eel.

Suad is native-born Dutch, and she came to Islam after meeting her future husband. That was a hard time at first, she remembers. Putting on the head-scarf, she apparently put off her family and her colleagues. She became a stranger to them. Only now, some eight years later, is she accepted again—though with reserve. The Dutch parents at the school where she worked mistrusted her, as if by wearing a head covering she had become a different person. Suad realizes that part of her problem lies in the working-class part of town where she lives, where her Dutch neighbors, minimally educated, now see foreign workers as a threat to their own livelihoods. To many of her countrymen, Suad has become a foreigner.

One morning in the bank, two elderly women in the line behind her discussed her as if she were deaf. "Look," said one, "here she can put money in the bank; in her own country she wouldn't have enough to live in, let alone save." Such jibes contribute to the isolation Holland's Muslims feel.

But Suad's life is not all gloomy. On several occasions Muslim women have come up to her on the street for

advice; others have praised her staunch adherence to her beliefs. Suad takes it all with her sensible Dutch charm.

Her husband has learned both the language and a trade since arriving in Holland. He works as a skilled craftsman for a local company, where the boss is accommodating about prayer time and has made a small corner available for prayers if there is no time to go to the local mosque. He says his Dutch wife has strengthened his faith, and although he hasn't lost his Mediterranean ways, he has adapted well to the unfamiliar stresses of northern Europe.

Ramadan brings this family closer, confirming their belief that it is possible to practice Islam in the non-Muslim world.



Once shunned—but now accepted—by her Dutch relatives after embracing Islam, Suad greets her sister on a street in The Hague.

...wa la ilaha ghairuka ...and there is no God but Thee

It is after 10 and an imposing white-bearded man stands in prayer among his sons. It is 'isha, the night prayer.

This man is a patriarch in the true sense of the word, not just a father to his sons, but a respected leader in his cosmopolitan community.

Ibrahim came to Holland nearly 20 years ago, and has seen many changes since then. In the early days there were few foreign workers; their Dutch colleagues were welcoming. He had sold his small shop in his homeland to come to Europe and Europe's opportunities. When he had saved enough working here, he opened a neighborhood grocery store of his own again. At the time, he had not learned more than the basics of the Dutch language, and there were some who took advantage of him, but with his strict sense of honesty and his innate feel for commerce, Ibrahim was gradually able to build a thriving business.

He is philosophical about his fellow countrymen in Europe; some, he believes, came with no thought but the money, unwilling to contribute to the industrial society that pays their wages. Some give their whole group a bad name. But when they occasionally run into trouble, he is still the father figure they come to for advice and help. It isn't just oil and olives that customers seek in Ibrahim's shop.

But his future troubles him. Although he would like to retire in the town where he was born, he knows that, under present regulations, once he leaves Holland it would be impossible for him to return to visit his grown children and their families, except on a three-month tourist visa. The Netherlands government, like several in Europe, is strongly encouraging "guest workers" over 55 years old to return to their native lands.

"It's a one-way ticket to the grave," says Ibrahim emotionally. "If I leave, I have no more rights in this country where I have given the best years of my life. And I know I

will not be fully at home in the place of my birth, either." He sees difficult times ahead if he stays in Holland, but, he wonders, "will it be more difficult here than with the political and economic uncertainties of my homelands."

For Ibrahim, at least, there is the comfort of his sons who will carry on the business he has built, and since there is still much to be done for his less fortunate countrymen here in the neighborhood, plans for the future are put off until tomorrow.

For the leaders of the Muslim community in the Netherlands, these are crucial times. Changing economic and political conditions in Europe, and recent events in the Middle East, have increased the isolation of the community from its hosts, who sometimes see all Muslims as suspect. This is a setback in the painstakingly slow progress made in the last few years towards understanding and acceptance.

Among the old problems still waiting for solutions is the plight of the now-aging first wave of immigrants who came north in the 1960s, when Europe was booming. And there are those — now young men and women in their 20s — who came as children with the families who arrived in the late 1970s, and were surprised to discover that their fathers, the heroes who had come home bearing gifts of radios and tales of the good life, were something less than heroes here, but simple shift workers in a tough, cold environment. These young people have tried to adapt and move beyond their rural family origins; in today's competitive labor market, though, even when they are qualified, they often find themselves at the end of the line. There are also some traditional parents who can't come to terms with the degree to which their sons have "become Dutch," or with the depth of their daughters' desire for education and a good job, or even a career.

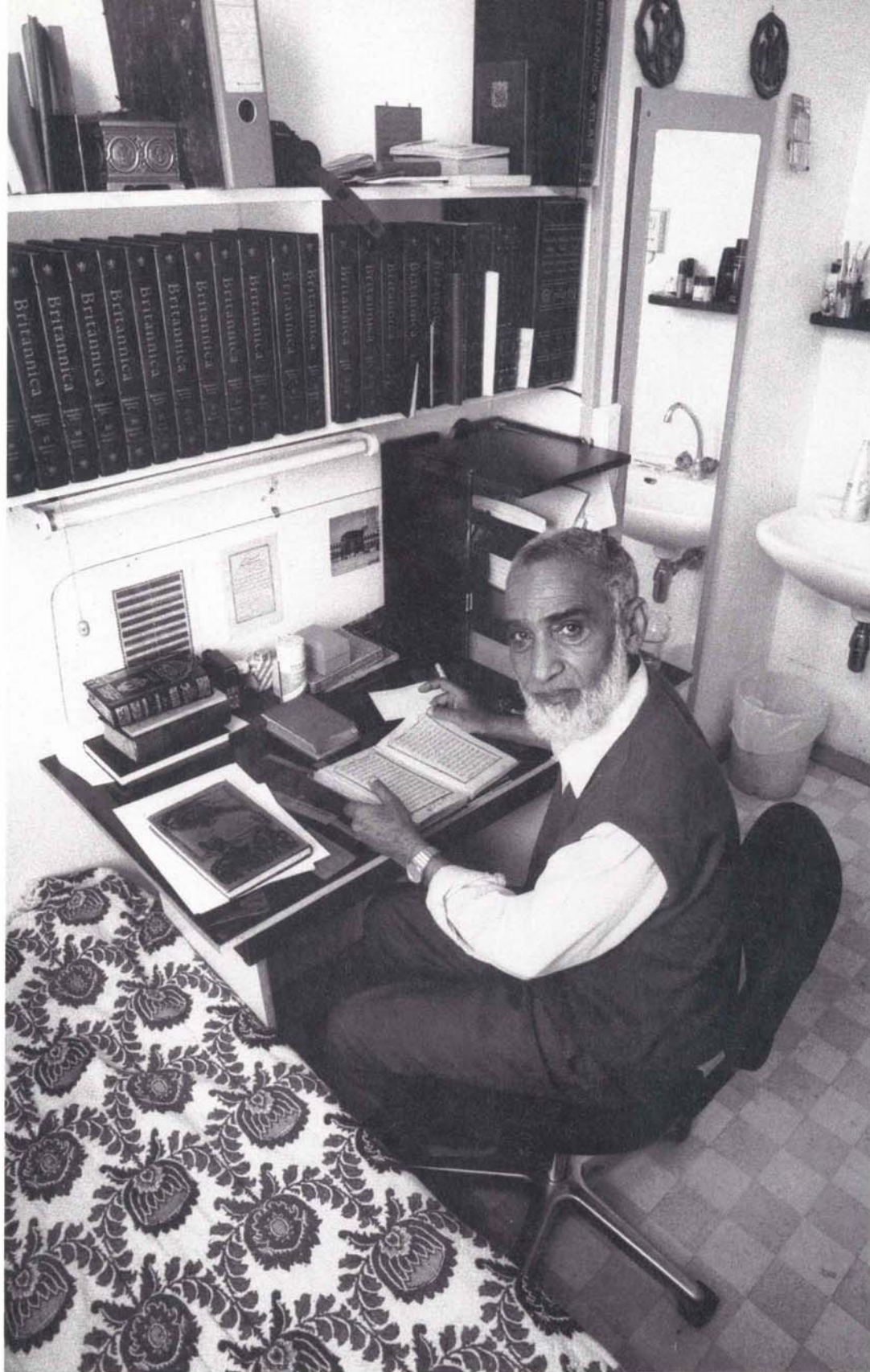
On the positive side, there is a growing number of educated young Muslim men and women who are engaging in dialogue with other social and religious groups in the Netherlands, trying to build more bridges from Islam to the predominantly Christian Dutch society. They are working to break down outdated stereotypes, so both communities can focus on their shared ethical and family values, and their common goals.

A little part of the Muslim world has settled in the Netherlands. It may take generations rather than decades, but as time passes, that community and its neighbors will come to know each other not as strangers, but as friends. And to the benefit of both. 🌐

Hilary Keatinge is an Irish writer who lives in the Netherlands.

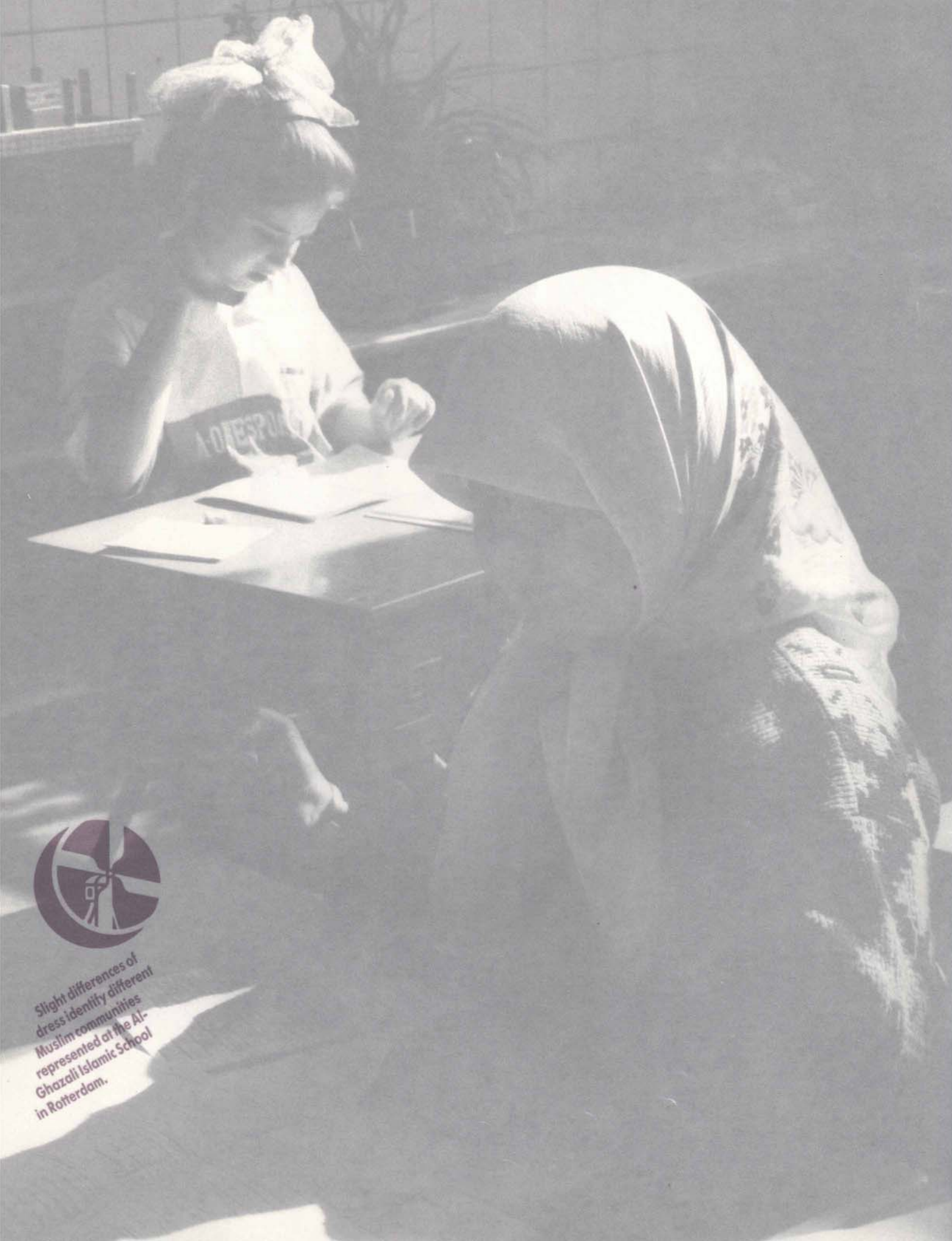


Muslim community leader Muhammad Ashraf-Basil prays in his home in The Hague.



A former university professor in Pakistan, Muhammad Ashraf-Basil continues to study at home in Holland.





Slight differences of dress identify different Muslim communities represented at the Al-Ghazali Islamic School in Rotterdam.

EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS

Matisse in Morocco: The Paintings and Drawings, 1912-1913. Organized by The State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, The State Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, The National Gallery of Art, Washington, and The Museum of Modern Art, New York, the exhibition features 23 brilliant paintings by French artist Henri Matisse, many of them masterworks, and 45 pen-and-ink sketches, many newly discovered and never before shown. The famous Moroccan Triptych from the Pushkin Museum, a trio of paintings never before seen in the United States, includes "On The Terrace," "Landscape Viewed from a Window" and "Casbah Gate" (at right). During two lengthy visits to Morocco that permanently altered his artistic vision, Matisse painted the landscape, buildings and gardens of Tangier, still lifes, and portraits of individual Moroccans. The country's strong light and bold architecture inspired the artist to flatten and simplify his compositions while employing bold juxtapositions of color. The exhibition will have only two US venues. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., March 18 through June 3, 1990; Museum of Modern Art, New York, June 24 through September 4, 1990.

The Wabar Meteorite. Fragments of the iron-nickel meteorite that left a 300-foot crater when it fell in the Rub' al-Khali, with related published material. Nance Museum, Kingsville, Missouri, March 15 through August 31, 1990.

Saudi Arabia: Yesterday and Today. A 100,000-square-foot exhibition on the land and people, past and present, of the kingdom, including a live *suq*, traditional food and dances, artifacts, and a laser slide show. Pier 88, New York Show Piers, through March 17, 1990; The Convention Center, Los Angeles, June 25 through 30, 1990.

The Arabic Calligraphy of Muhammad Zakariya. One of America's leading calligraphers presents 28 works in various styles. University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, March 18 through March 30, 1990; Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minnesota, April 18 through June 1, 1990.

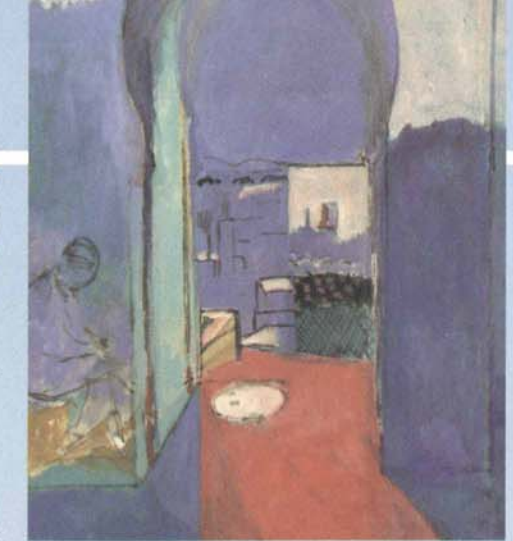
Ikats: Woven Silks from Central Asia. Colorful hangings, robes and coats demonstrate a complex and beautiful dyeing method. Holburne Museum and Crafts Centre, Bath, U.K., March 23 through June 10, 1990.

Painting for Princes: The Art of the Book in Islam. Arab, Persian, Turkish and Moghul miniatures show the inspiration, care and skill lavished on princely books. Sackler Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, through March 25, 1990.

Indian Miniatures from the Galbraith Collection. Paintings from Kangra and other art centers collected by John Kenneth Galbraith. Sackler Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, March 31 through May 27, 1990.

Traditional Crafts of Saudi Arabia. The John Topham collection of weavings, jewelry, a Bedouin tent, and metal, wooden and leather handicraft objects. Maxwell Museum of Anthropology, Albuquerque, N.M., March 31 through November 1990.

The First Egyptians. The customs and everyday life of early Egyptian society in the predynastic period between 4000 and 2700 B.C. Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C., through April 1, 1990.



STATE PUSHKIN MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

Nomads and Nobility: Art From the Ancient Near East. Artifacts from the pre-Islamic Middle East: metal-work, ivory and ceramic objects. Sackler Gallery, Washington, D.C., April 7 through September 30, 1990.

Carthage: A Mosaic of Ancient Tunisia. Pictorial mosaics, Punic jewelry, Roman bronzes and 300 other pieces from 800 B.C. to the coming of Islam show ancient Tunisia as a center of culture and art. Cincinnati Art Museum, through April 8, 1990; Musée de la civilisation, Quebec City, Quebec, June 28, 1990 through March 5, 1991.

First Encounters: Spanish Exploration in the Caribbean and the United States, 1492-1570. Spain's *hidalgo* warrior class was one of the forces behind Spain's efforts to settle and explore the New World. Important elements of culture and technology used were of Arab origin. Museum of Science and Industry, Tampa, Florida, through April 8, 1990; South Carolina State Museum, Columbia, May 1 through July 26, 1990; Witte Museum, San Antonio, Texas, August 31 through November 10, 1990.

Gold of Africa: Jewelry and Ornaments from Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Senegal. More than 150 spectacular objects are evidence of highly developed skills and tastes in the West Africa of the 19th and 20th centuries. Dallas Museum of Art, April 8 through June 7, 1990.

Clouds and Flowers. Ikats from Turkestan and printed cottons from Persia. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, through April 15, 1990.

In Our Time: The World as Seen by Magnum Photographers. From the Middle East and elsewhere and arranged by themes, 300 images by 60 photojournalists. Chicago Historical Society, through April 15, 1990; Minneapolis Institute of Arts, May 5 through August 12, 1990.

India Along the Ganges: Photographs by Raghubir Singh. Sixty-five recent photographs by one of India's finest photographers. Sackler Gallery, Washington, D.C., through April 15, 1990.

India: Beauty in Stone. Islamic carvings and buildings of India are among those shown in 49 color prints by Beatrice Pitney Lamb. Asia Society, New York, through April 15, 1990.

Majolica. The origins of this brilliant and exuberant Italian earthenware lie in the energy and vivacity of Islamic pottery. Exhibit reopened on a reduced scale. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, through April 15, 1990.

Romance of the Taj Mahal. Shah Jahan's eye for beauty is demonstrated by 200 objects from European and American collections. Toledo [Ohio] Museum of Art, April 28 through June 24, 1990; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, August 23 through November 25, 1990.

The Plastics Age: From Modernity to Post-Modernity traces the progression of petrochemical plastics from early use as substitutes for natural materials to their present role. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, through April 29, 1990.

The Sphinx and the Lotus: The Egyptian Movement in American Decorative Arts 1869-1939. Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, New York, through April 29, 1990.

Rajasthani Painting. Paintings from Rajasthani centers in northwest India, created between the 17th and 19th centuries. Brooklyn Museum, through April 30, 1990.

Turkey: Splendors of the Anatolian Civilizations. Artifacts spanning eight millennia show the subtle links among eras and civilizations in Anatolia. Musée de la civilisation, Quebec City, Quebec, through May 6, 1990.

Christians and Muslims on the Eve of the 21st Century. Eminent scholars and speakers discuss challenges to and opportunities for dialogue. Rice University, Houston, May 11-14, 1990.

Arabia: Sand, Sea and Sky. Three 50-minute films on the natural history of the Arabian Peninsula, including the western mountains, the Red Sea rift and the sands of the Rub' al-Khali. Broadcast in the United States on the Discovery Channel on three consecutive Tuesday evenings at 8:00, May 15, 22 and 29. Consult local cable listings.

After Tutankhamun. International conference on the Valley of the Kings, including as speakers 12 of the world's leading experts on the royal tombs, their treasures and their texts. Highclere Castle, Hampshire, U.K., June 15 to 17, 1990.

Digging the Ancient Near East. Explores the scientific methods and techniques used by present-day archeologists and features five current expeditions working in the Middle East. Oriental Institute Museum, Chicago, until June, 1990.

Looking at Islam: Contemporary Devotional Posters from Pakistan reflect a wide range of Islamic traditions with images from calligraphic to allegorical. City Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire, July 5 through August 19, 1990.

Convergence 90, national conference of the Handweavers' Guild of America, includes seminars on Saudi and Omani weaving and spinning. San Jose [California] Convention Center, July 13 through 15, 1990.

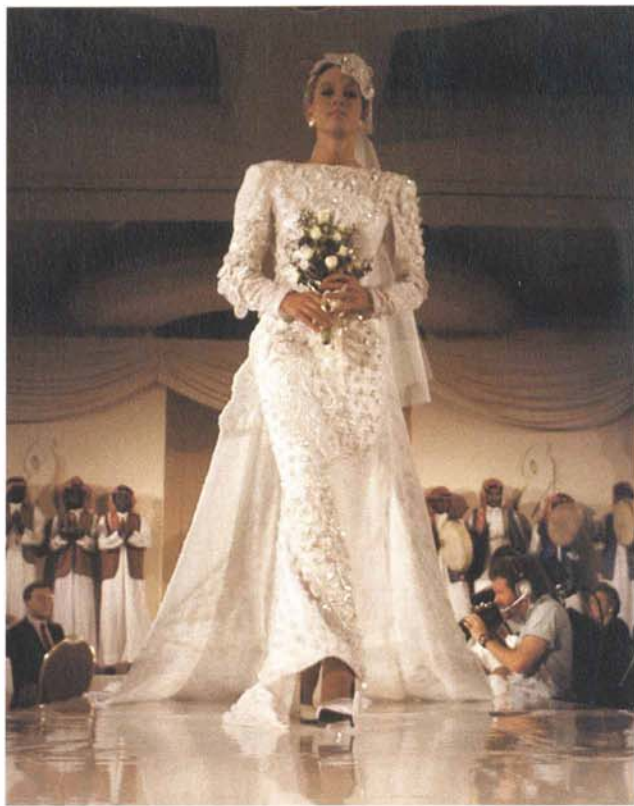
Tipu Sultan, Tiger of Mysore is centered on the tiger motifs that identify the personal possessions of the 18th-century ruler of Mysore. Zamana Gallery, London, July 19 through September 23, 1990.

Variations on a Script: Islamic Calligraphy from the Vever Collection highlights a variety of calligraphic styles. Sackler Gallery, Washington, D.C., through summer 1990.

Palestinian Costume. Richly ornamented traditional costumes, headaddresses and jewelry of Palestinian villagers and Bedouins are revealed as expressions of social status and regional identity. Photographs provide context. Museum of Mankind, London, until November 1991.

The Aramco Exhibit. Centered on the Arab-Islamic technical heritage, this permanent interactive, "learn-by-doing" scientific exhibit relates the historical background to today's petroleum exploration, production and transportation. Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

Information is correct at press time, but please reconfirm dates and times before traveling. Readers are welcome to submit information for possible inclusion in this listing.



WRITTEN BY PINEY KESTING
PHOTOGRAPHED BY ROBERT AZZI

FASHIONED WITH TRADITION



*"Akbar has
reinterpreted
traditional
embroidery in his
more contemporary
styles."*

An October dusk on the banks of the Seine in 1987. Among 200,000 spectators from around the world, excitement was growing. It was the Second International Fashion Festival, and in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower, a 250-meter (820-foot) catwalk stretched across the Trocadéro fountains at the Palais de Chaillot. Searchlights swept the darkening sky as 900 models, representing designers from five continents, waited nervously for a turn on the runway.

Also backstage was a Saudi Arab designer, calmly putting the finishing touches on one of his dresses. It was an important moment in his life: Not only was this the first time his country had been invited to participate in this international festival, it was also Adnan Akbar's debut before such a vast and sophisticated audience.

Finally the show began, and at last it was Akbar's turn. Twenty-five models wearing Adnan Akbar originals glided down the runway beneath a shower of golden fireworks. Flanked by 40 camels with riders in traditional Saudi costumes, the models' entrance was as dramatic and as creative as Akbar's gowns themselves.

Afterward, French critics described Akbar as the "Saint Laurent of the Middle East." Serge Vaissière, president of the Comité de l'Excellence Européenne, said that Akbar "created a sensation" at the festival with his "Thousand And One Nights, Scheherezade dresses," and "contributed to the prestige of Saudi Arabian creativity throughout the world."

The Second International Fashion Festival was a milestone in the life and career of designer Adnan Akbar, often a participant in various European shows but never before a well-known figure in the world of haute couture – at least not in that world's Western reaches. Today, with several prestigious European awards under his belt, and two successful fashion shows held in Washington, D.C. last August, Akbar is becoming an established figure in a world he once only dreamed about.

Born in 1949 in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, Akbar was influenced by his elegant and fashionable mother. By the tender age of eight, he had begun designing clothes, using his sisters' dolls as mannequins. Akbar notes that designing has always been "an inner urge" for him – an urge, however, that ran contrary to the more conventional expectations of his father.

Opposed to his son's interest in high fashion, not considered a man's profession in those times, Akbar's father sent him to school in Pakistan at 17 to study political science. Respectful of his father's wishes,



Adnan "focuses on aspects of the Saudi environment and tries to re-express them in a totally new way."



Akbar attended to his studies, but between classes and at night he sought out local embroiderers and diligently learned the secrets of their trade.

Akbar recalls that during his early years in Karachi he would sometimes meet privately with artisans and work until the early hours, setting stones into elaborate designs, practicing embroidery and applying spangles to velvet and satin. "I didn't want anyone to discover what I was doing," Akbar says.

By 1968, it was clear that Akbar's fascination with couture was more than a passing whim. His father acquiesced and sent him to Lebanon to study under Madame Sylvia, a well-known French couturière in Beirut. From there he went to Paris, where he observed fashion trends and spent endless hours researching in *Vogue's* library.

Today, high fashion is no stranger to the Arabian Peninsula. A number of European designers have presented their fashions to women in Saudi Arabia and in neighboring Gulf capitals. *U. S. News & World Report* spotlighted Saudi designer Yahya al-Bishri when he unveiled his latest collection in Paris last autumn. But when Adnan Akbar returned from France in 1970 and – at 21 – established an atelier in Jiddah, his was the first and only house of haute couture in the kingdom. As a boy, he had made clothes for his sisters' dolls; now the first dress he designed in his atelier was a sister's wedding gown. It was a fitting beginning for a couturier who would become known in Saudi Arabia for his exquisitely hand-sewn, hand-embroidered wedding gowns and trousseaux.

Akbar has focused on designing one-of-a-kind gowns individualized with magnificent embroidery and intricate detail. His gowns are a graceful mixture of old and new, of East and West. Inspired by the rich traditions and cultural heritage of his country, Akbar says he "focuses on aspects of the Saudi environment and tries to re-express them in a totally new way." His designs, he explains, are based on "characteristics that are traditionally Arabian, adapted to meet the way the Saudi woman is changing, as well as how women around the world are changing."

Today Akbar's work takes him too around the world, to search for ideas and participate in shows. When he presents his designs, he feels he is helping Western women understand the beauty hidden within his culture. Since 1982, his fashions have been shown in Milan, Cannes, Amsterdam, Cairo and at home, in Riyadh and Jiddah. Currently, he is working on a line of ready-to-wear clothing and preparing to open his first store in Kuwait.

1988 was a landmark year for Akbar. Christian Lacroix, a leading French couturier, named him international designer of the year. In June, Akbar also became the first Arab designer to collaborate with Bianchini Ferrier, a leading textile firm based in Lyons, France. The century-old firm supplies fabrics to such haute couture salons as Chanel, Lacroix and Armani. Under the terms of his three-year contract, Akbar designs 40 different fabrics a year, sold in exclusive shops around the world.

"Adnan Akbar is incredible," said François Guy Ferrier, Bianchini Ferrier's director-general when the agreement was signed. "He has more ideas in seconds than other designers have in days. This is the first time in fashion," he added, "where French and Arab tastes blend, a marriage between two countries more than between two companies."

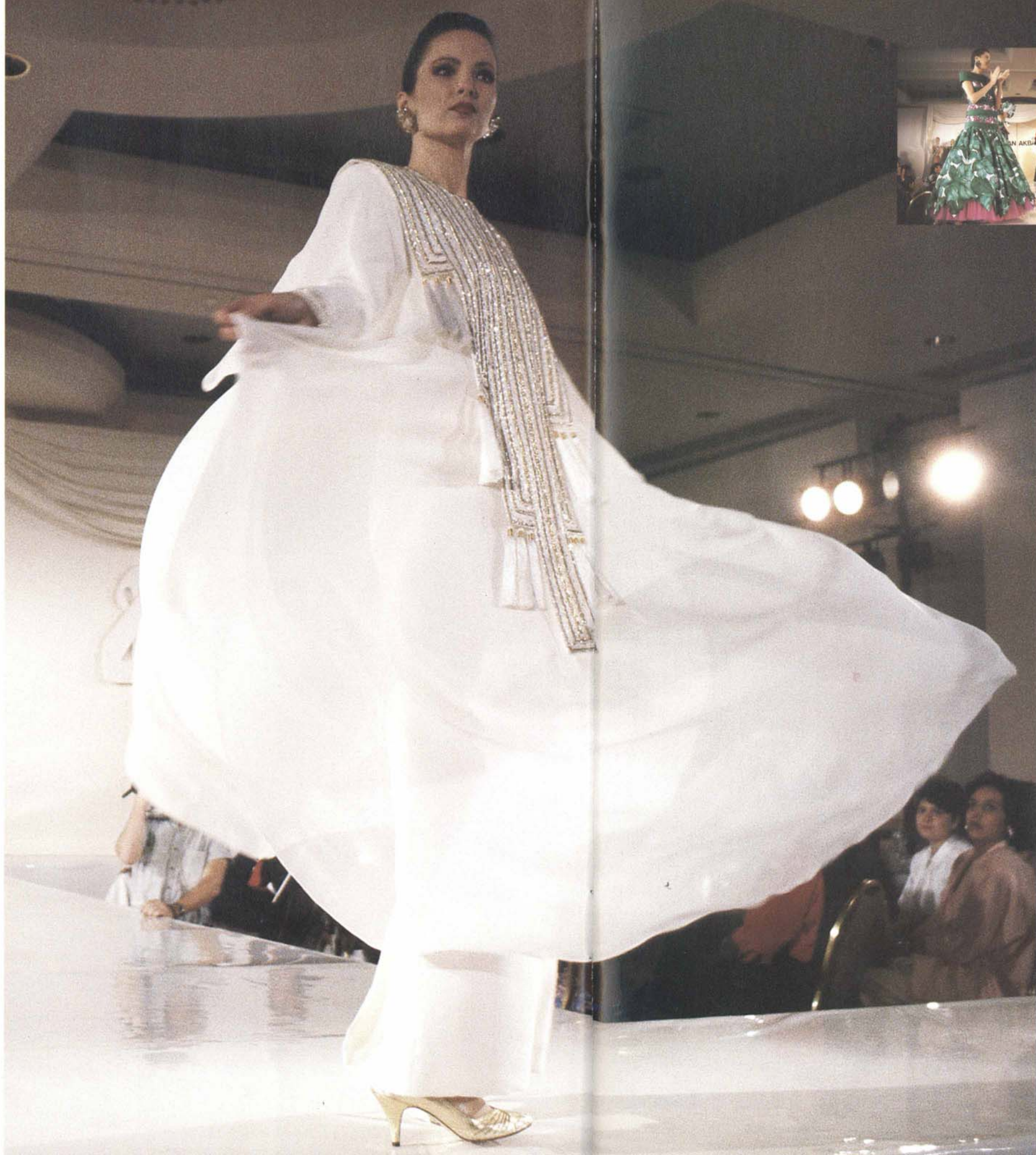
"And it is so rare," added Christian Madoux, an associate of Ferrier's, "to find a couturier who knows fabric, design, embroidery – in fact, everything from the thread to the finished garment."

In September 1988, Akbar was awarded the "Triumph" Grand Prize of European Excellence from the Comité de l'Excellence Européenne in honor of the "original creativity, refinement and aesthetics" of his collection. Presenting the award, Serge Vaissière said, "In less than 20 years, Adnan Akbar has established himself as the undisputed master of Arabian fashion, perfectly combining a touch of Occidental fashion within the Oriental tradition of *The Thousand And One Nights*."

Describing Akbar as a "creator of versatile talent," Vaissière noted that the young Saudi is the first non-European designer to receive the award, which is presented to leading personalities and enterprises which uphold a "European tradition of excellence and good taste." In previous years, the award has been given to Christian Dior, Yves Saint Laurent and Cartier.

While European designers keep their eyes trained on Akbar, the Saudi couturier is turning his attention to the United States. Akbar premiered his fashions in two separate shows in Washington, D.C. last August, the first at Garfinckel's, a prominent Washington store, a second at the Park Hyatt Hotel. He also designed the traditional dress worn by female guides in the exhibition "Saudi Arabia: Yesterday and Today," which is currently touring the United States (See *Aramco World*, November-December 1989).

Akbar's fashions were enthusiastically received in Washington. "Part of the beauty of the premiere was that the audience didn't expect it," noted Johara Alatas,



Adnan (above, applauded by his models) takes rich elements of his culture and puts them onto Western styles.

organizer of the fashion shows. "I think a lot of Americans still believe all Saudi women always wear black."

Jinny Eury, regional director of The Fashion Group International of Washington, D.C. admitted, "We probably had some pre-conceived ideas about Arabian fashion." Contrary to her expectations, Akbar's gowns were like "the plumage of birds, magnificent, a fairytale. I was delightfully surprised."

Nina Hyde, fashion editor of *The Washington Post*, thinks Akbar's clothes are "quite special." She described his designs as "extremely intelligent and well-targeted to his customers." His gowns have traditional influences that are used "in a very modern way."

From crisply tailored suits with embroidered jackets to silk taffeta and crepe after-five dresses and satin gowns, Akbar's designs reflect the same striking mixture of vibrant color, drama and elegance that characterizes traditional clothing in Saudi Arabia. Saudi women considered their richly colored, hand-embroidered gowns their main luxuries in life. Pat Fiske, executive director of the U.S. Committee for Saudi Arabian Cultural Heritage, who attended the show at Garfinckel's, said she was "delighted to see that in some instances Akbar drew directly from the kind of traditional costumes we've exhibited in 'Palms and Pomegranates,'" a reference to the collection of historic Saudi costumes assembled by the committee (See *Aramco World*, September-October 1987).

Aniko Gaal, vice president of fashion and public relations at Garfinckel's, agreed that one of Akbar's fortes "is to take rich elements from his culture out of that context and put them onto Western styles."

According to Mokhless al-Hariri, president of Georgetown Design and acting producer of both Washington fashion shows, "The unifying thread in women's clothing in Saudi Arabia is undoubtedly the embroidery. Akbar has reinterpreted traditional embroidery in his more contemporary styles."

"It is important to feel the Oriental touch in my collection," Akbar says. Although he admires and is influenced by the fashions of French couturiers, his greatest source of inspiration remains his own culture. As a designer, Akbar would like Western women to become more exposed to Eastern styles. And as a Saudi, Akbar hopes his fashions "will continue to promote the silent beauty of Saudi Arabia to women worldwide." 🌐

Piney Kesting, who earned a master's degree from John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, is a free-lance writer specializing in Middle Eastern affairs.



A CAPITAL ZOO in RIYADH

WRITTEN BY ARTHUR CLARK

PHOTOGRAPHED BY LAWRENCE CURTIS, ALI KHALIFA AND ARTHUR CLARK

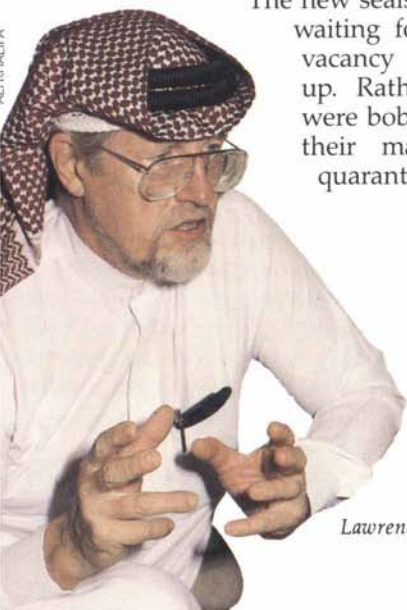
"Pardon me if I smell like fish. I'm sharing my pool with some seals."

Lawrence Curtis, the Texan director of the new Riyadh Zoological Gardens, was only half kidding when we talked last spring. In the swimming pool behind his house at the zoo frolicked four young harbor seals, just in from an aquarium in Victoria, British Columbia. Their meals consisted mainly of mackerel.

For 59-year-old Curtis, who has adopted the traditional dress of his host country – a *thawb* or long-sleeved gown, and a red-and-white-checked *ghutra* or headcloth – sharing space with the animals is part of the job.

It's also something of an honor, for the zoo, just three years old this month, is already home to more than 1,400 animals representing some 350 species, a number of which are on the world's endangered-species list.

The new seals weren't waiting for a zoo vacancy to come up. Rather, they were bobbing out their mandatory quarantine.



Lawrence Curtis

Also within the walls surrounding the zoo director's house were Barbary falcons, tiny dik-dik antelope and sand cats ready to breed. A 75-kilogram (165-pound) horned turtle named Hank was living in what looked like a dog house in the garage. "And somewhere around here," mullied Curtis, "are three mountain gazelle."

At 22 hectares (55 acres), the Riyadh Zoo is about the size of the Audubon Zoo in New Orleans. It cost \$33.3 million to build and the city reportedly spent another \$6.4 million for animal acquisition and management. Open three days a week for families and women, and another three days for men, the zoo attracts hundreds of visitors each day, and officials, happy about its rapid development, confidently predict that "as it matures it will become one of the greatest zoos in the world."

The zoo itself not only provides the city's – and the nation's – public with chances for animal-watching, but serves broader aims as well. "The main aim of the zoo is to conserve and breed the native species of Saudi Arabia," says 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Zamil, general manager of Riyadh's Parks and Recreation Department, "and we're succeeding in doing that. The zoo also has cultural, research and educational purposes. That is why it is important to the kingdom as a whole."

Curtis was hired just four months before the zoo opened. He brought decades of experience to the job – 15 years as head of the Forth Worth (Texas) Zoo, 15 more as chief of the Oklahoma City Zoo – and a wealth of contacts in the international zoo-keeping community.



LAWRENCE CURTIS

Awaiting quarantine clearance before joining other animals on display at Riyadh's new zoo, a tiny dik-dik antelope (right) roams zoo director Lawrence Curtis's garden, while young harbor seals (below), newly arrived from Canada, frolic in his pool.



LAWRENCE CURTIS

Visitors to the zoological gardens are greeted by a pond full of honking flamingoes, their diets enriched by ground carrots to keep them – literally – in the pink.

Strollers can continue their walk past the group of older seals, cool in a pool of their own. Less energetic souls can take a seat in one of the two gaily painted trains that make regular, 20-minute circuits of the zoo. Stops are timed to match recordings of information about the animals that are played in each car.

For youngsters, there is a playground where they can run off extra energy. Designed by the London-based consultants Safari Parks International, the zoo has a gemlike quality accentuated by careful landscaping, lush plantings of flowers and several bubbling watercourses. The Riyadh Zoological Gardens are sited on the grounds of the city's old zoo, built during the reign from 1953 to 1964 of King Sa'ud ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz. That zoo was razed in 1981.

Several groups of animals are displayed in cages or enclosures according to their geographic origin or their taxonomic classification. The wildlife of the Australian bush is represented, for example, by kangaroos, kookaburras, wallabies and emus. From South America come tapirs – rain-forest dwellers – and alpaca, llama and guanaco from the Andes.

The Asian enclosure features water buffalo, black buck antelope and Sika deer. Zebra, eland, impala, ostrich and marabou stork represent the African plains.

Asian and African elephants live in the same large enclosure. Nearby, a Bengal tiger pads silently across a tree-trunk bridge; rare griffon vultures, native to the Riyadh region, soar through the air in a high-ceilinged aviary for birds of prey.

The reptile house holds pythons, cobras, and sand vipers. Rattlers were flown in from the Cen-Tex Zoo in Waco, Texas. There are also monitor lizards and *dhubs*, native Arabian spiny-tailed lizards. The zoo has some 80 species of birds, including the houbara bustard, which is probably extinct in the wild in Saudi Arabia.

Signs in Arabic and English front the exhibits and provide details about each species. Some signs carry a special emblem – the head of an Arabian oryx combined with the international negative symbol: a red circle and diagonal slash. The emblem means that the species faces worldwide extinction in the wild if man is not careful.

'Abd al-'Aziz al-Zamil says his favorite creature at the zoo is a male Arabian oryx acquired from al-Areen Wildlife Park in Bahrain. It is the sole representative of its kind in Riyadh. Acquiring a female oryx is a priority for the zoo, so that it can start its

own breeding program (See *Aramco World*, September-October 1989).

The zoo already has a successful breeding program for sand cats, thought by some to have been the animal once tamed by ancient Egyptians and thus the ancestor of the domestic tabby of today. There are about 30 sand cats in captivity worldwide, and 14 of those are in the Riyadh Zoo, where they are favorites of children. Last spring a mother sand cat zealously guarded week-old kittens in the temperature-controlled lemur house, the fourth such litter born at the zoo. Two more have been produced since.

Success in sand cat breeding has provided opportunities to carry out research into little-known aspects of that animal's biology. "We're learning about what sand cats eat, their social, solitary and breeding habits, and their dietary requirements and diseases," said Curtis. "Research is a very sophisticated activity for any zoo, but we're doing it already, and getting a lot of information on the breeding habits and biology of a number of native Saudi Arabian animals."

The zoo is also carrying out studies in cooperation with other organizations in the kingdom, including the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development and King Sa'ud University in Riyadh.

Other representatives of rare native wildlife species include the bateleur eagle, the Arabian leopard and the cheetah. The zoo has several ostrich, birds which once roamed the kingdom but are now extinct there in the wild.

Other native species in the collection, such as the *dhub* and the hamadryas baboon, can still be frequently spotted in their natural habitats.

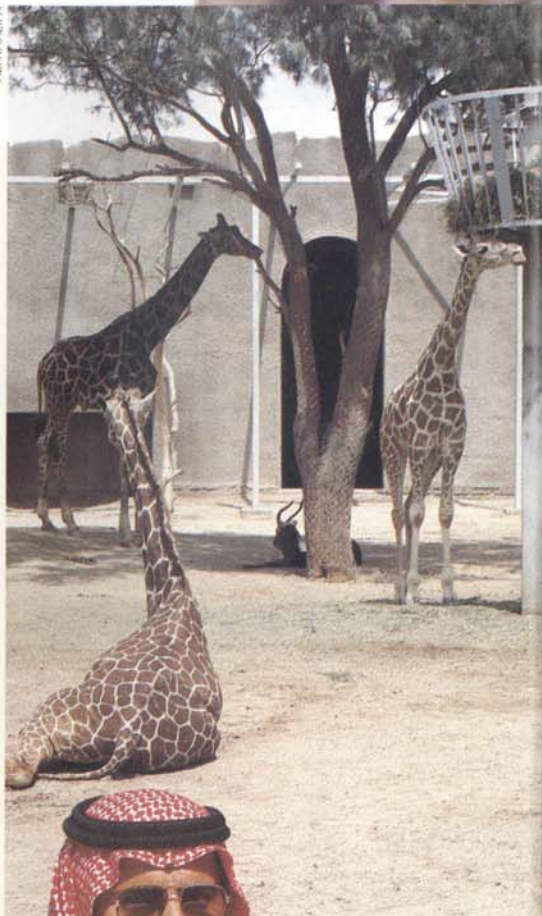
Arabic and English-language publications are being prepared by the zoo for elementary, secondary and college-age students to tell the story of native wildlife. The guidebooks, keyed to the signs in front of each exhibit, will be based "on what visitors can see, what will make young people think," said Ahmed al-Hussein, zoo coordinator for the municipality, who has played a major role in drafting the Arabic texts.

"The zoo should be an outdoor classroom where people can learn about nature and the environment," added Curtis.

The zoo was the site, in June 1988, of a rare pygmy hippo birth that drew local and international press coverage. Zoo officials are now debating whether to keep the youngster for breeding or send him to another zoo. There have been losses, too. In the fall of 1988, a two-day-old lion cub, one of a pair, accidentally drowned.



LAWRENCE CURTIS



LAWRENCE CURTIS

"At home" in the Riyadh zoo are species native to Saudi Arabia (clockwise from left): the rare sand cat, green sea turtle, sand viper, and falcon. Giraffes come from further afield, on the African plains.



ALI KHALIFA



ALI KHALIFA

The zoo has three full-time veterinarians, a well-equipped clinic and surgical facility, and quarantine facilities – including the director's pool – for new arrivals. Animals are vaccinated against diseases according to a computerized record-keeping system, and get regular checkups.

The zoo's kitchen provides dusk-to-dawn room service for 167 different diets. Among the delicacies: spinach leaves and cucumbers for tapirs; day-old chicks for raccoons and birds of prey; and bread with honey for the brown bear. The zoo's pythons get a guinea pig or rabbit once every 10 days.

The zoo raises its own mice, rats, mealworms, crickets, rabbits and tilapia fish as animal food. Commercially obtained food, prepared daily, includes 225 kilograms (495 pounds) of boneless beef, 140 kilograms (310 pounds) of apples and 90 kilograms (200 pounds) of carrots.

The kitchen staff starts the day at 3:00 a.m. "It's like a hotel where you're preparing meals for 1,200 guests," said the zoo director. Much of the animals' food is produced in Saudi Arabia. Locally grown *birseem* clover, a staple for the herbivores, "is the best feed I've ever found," said Curtis. "Any zoo director in the world would give his eyeteeth for this kind of fodder."

Curtis said the zoo directorship presented both cultural and professional challenges. "I had run two internationally known zoos, but here you have a totally different society – and a completely new zoo. It is well designed and the municipality is gung ho to make it a success."

Riyadh's summertime climate – dry and hot, with temperatures sometimes hitting 46 degrees centigrade (115°F) – also sparked Curtis's interest. "The climate posed a zoological challenge," noted the tall, blue-eyed Texan: "Can you really keep animals alive next to the Rub' al-Khali?"

To protect animals from the brilliant summer sun, hundreds of meters of shade cloth have been hung over cages to cut heat significantly and stop the penetration of dangerous ultraviolet rays. A computer-operated system of sprayers regularly mists many of the animals.

"There are not many zoos built in a climate with this extreme heat," said Curtis. "We've had a few failures [with species adaptation], but amazing success overall." He cites the seals as "a perfect example."

The zoo first opted not to stock any of the cool-water mammals in Riyadh's hot climate. But the installation of sprinklers and fountains, and the use of other cooling techniques, brought pool temperatures well within the seals' comfort range.

The proof? "We're going to have baby seals," said Curtis.

On the other hand, the Arabian Peninsula's position at the intersection of three major biological regions, Africa, Europe and Asia, presented a unique opportunity to show animals important to the region. "As a result of this country's location, you have flora and fauna found nowhere else in the world," he pointed out.

Another unusual aspect is that the Riyadh Zoo is one of only a handful in the world to be built from scratch in recent years. That provided the opportunity to establish policy and build an animal collection from the ground up. The zoo's animal acquisition campaign received a crucial shot in the arm when the municipality agreed to abide by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The treaty commits countries to honor the conservation laws of other states. Though the kingdom is still studying full accession to CITES, the municipality's decision brought its new zoo an international nod of approval.

In the spirit of CITES, the zoo has had to turn down some sales pitches for animals it would have liked to buy, but the policy has helped bring more wildlife into the facility than it has cost. "The CITES agreement is the most important thing the municipality did for the zoo," said Curtis. "It's why we have the animal collection we have here today."

The agreement helped open the doors of zoos from Texas to Kenya. The tapirs came from the zoo in Lima, Peru, for example, while Toronga Park in Sydney, Australia, provided kangaroos and dingoes. A conservation project in Mombasa, Kenya, sent two Nile crocodiles. The zoo in Cairo furnished giant tortoises and the Singapore Zoo dispatched a crocodile.

In the United States, Duke University in Durham, N.C., sent lemurs. The zoo's pygmy hippo herd was gathered from New York's Bronx Zoo, the Gladys Porter Zoo in Brownsville, Texas, and the private Eureka Springs Zoo in Mountain Home, Arkansas. Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge provided muskrats.

Riyadh has also begun to return favors. In 1988 the zoo sent two sand cats to the Cincinnati Zoo, which had earlier supplied Arabian leopards and a python.

Local sources have also helped fill out the zoo's collection. The bateleur eagles were acquired from residents of Jiddah and from the mountainous 'Asir area in Saudi Arabia's southwest. Its mountain gazelle, also native to the kingdom, were provided from private collections.

One of its trio of striped hyenas, an endangered native species, was handed over – on a leash – by a Bedouin, while his weeping children watched. "He'd raised

Born on the premises, an eland fawn (opposite page) joins over 1200 animals at the Riyadh zoo, among them (below) brown bears – once native to Arabia – and a black and white lemur from Madagascar.



ALI RHALIFA



ALI RHALIFA

the hyena from a pup," said Curtis, "but couldn't keep him any longer."

A few of the zoo's band of hamadryas baboons, also native to 'Asir, found their way into the collection in an even more novel way: They were bagged in Riyadh by zoo vets armed with a tranquilizer gun. Local travelers had brought baboons home when they were small, then turned them loose when they got too big to handle, said Curtis, adding that the first baboon-collection call came after one of the large and impressive primates "occupied an embassy." The zoo vets capture several baboons every year in the capital.

Curtis sees a bright future for the young zoo, with its modern facilities, its growing animal collection and strong support from the city. It has already won a special place in the hearts of local Saudis. "Many people come here carrying a rug and a coffee pot and, especially in the evening, they sit on the grass just enjoying nature," said Curtis. "I've rarely seen that in an American zoo."

"Coming here gives people a better feeling about the world," he said. "You can see it on their faces when they leave." 🌐

Arthur Clark, a veteran Aramco writer based in Dhahran, is a frequent visitor to zoos around the world.

LAWRENCE CURTIS



ALI RHALIFA