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BOMA Member Awarded "Outstanding Citizen"



On Friday, March 31, 2006 BOMA Member Abdul Mallick was presented the Los Angeles Council Member Jan Perry's award from City Council as "Outstanding Citizen"

This is the story not of an Ambassador of a great country or nation, but rather an Ambassador of good will who happens to spend most of his time right here in his own neighborhood. For those of us who have been to Bank of America Plaza at 333 S. Hope Street (www.333southhope.com) in Downtown Los Angeles, undoubtedly remember being greeted by Abdul Mallick, either with a gracious smile or a short bow, and it is clear to us that he embodies the very word Ambassador. Abdul is retiring in 2006, after dedicating 32 years of his life to the largest building in the City, and its thousands of occupants and visitors. How many of us can say we've dedicated 32 years to anything?

No, Bank of America Plaza will not be the same without dear Abdul, its Local Ambassador and life's blood. Yet he makes his exit with a sense of pride and a sense of continued purpose – to serve and uplift his fellow man. "Working at this building every day has been a dream come true for a man like me," says Abdul, "and I have cried thinking how much I will miss everyone. But now it is time for my wife and me to embark on a new dream." This new dream is traveling to India to help reform the famous INSAN Mission (www.insanmission.org), an educational and humanitarian mission founded by his brother, who as a result was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2003. Without question Abdul's huge heart will continue to touch and

person he meets, including now the children and poor of India.

Abdul grew up in Bihar, India in a town called Jehanabad where his parents' intellect, virtue and spiritual values had a profound influence on him and his siblings. Abdul's mother, Zaitoon, whom he likens in character to Eleanor Roosevelt, played an important role in the strength of her husband and family. As was typical of women in India at the time, Zaitoon grew up without formal schooling; however, her insatiable thirst for knowledge was quenched by her brother as he brought her daily newspapers, periodicals and books to read. Through this Zaitoon gained a thorough understanding of world events and news which she would later share with her children. As a boy, Abdul's father Hafeez studied hard in school, and also rose to be a famous soccer player. After graduation he began working for the government in the excise business. Hafeez and Zaitoon were arranged by their families to be married, and went on to raise six children including Abdul.

Since childhood Abdul was a more "spirited" than his other siblings. His sense of adventure often superseded his ability to concentrate on his studies. At age fourteen, Abdul was counseled harshly for this by an Uncle and in reaction fled away to a neighboring town. He was taken in by a wealthy family convinced that he had been orphaned! As the weeks passed, Abdul's guilt at abandoning his own family was alleviated somewhat by the excitement of his new life - new friends and a new school - and the hopes that he could one day return to his own home and make them proud with his success. Abdul's friendly nature quickly won him the election as class president! Still, the day eventually came when he gave up and returned home with guilt and admitted his lie. "My dear Abdul!" his new father said, "Do not be afraid. You have not done anything wrong. You are very young and in a short time you will have become a part of our family. We will not cease loving you. You will have to come back home now as your family is surely missing you, but we will keep up in touch with you." And over the years this promise was kept.

Abdul's family was so relieved to see him, he was not punished. Once his mother and sister were finished fawning over him, his brothers took him back to his boarding school where he behaved in a more disciplined manner than before. He continued on to college where he studied the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. As he grew and rather confident in his abilities, Abdul would go on to receive a Bachelor's Degree and become Principal of a high school where he worked diligently to improve the quality of educational programs.

After arriving in Los Angeles and working several odd jobs as a janitor or security guard, in 1974 Abdul interviewed for the position of "Watchkeeper" at Security Pacific Bank's new headquarters at 333 S. Hope Street Downtown. The beautiful 10 million square foot flagship office tower had not yet opened for business, but Abdul walked up the front steps he was immediately taken by its elegance and grandeur. He knew in his heart he had found a home. His graceful demeanor, educational background and noticeable pride in the building made him the perfect hire. He was quickly promoted to Head Watchkeeper, supervising a staff of 10. Over the three decades Abdul has worked in the building, that pride has never faded. It has shown on his face each day, whether Abdul was greeting a fellow worker or a prominent world leader. Many VIPs have passed through those front lobby

over the past 32 years to be greeted and escorted by Abdul - including US President Gerald Ford, California Governors Deukmejian and Schwarzenegger, Donald Trump and Jane Fonda to name a few.

Everyone at the Building grew to love Abdul for his kindness and generosity. "When I started there in 1984," remembers former Operations Manager P Linton, "Abdul introduced me to the Chairman of Security Pacific Bank who was on the 54th floor. The Chairman's large corner office was sparsely decorated without so much as a photograph of his family on his desk. What stood out was a set of small ivory elephants on his credenza, which he proudly pointed out as gifts from Abdul's many trips to India. Abdul stood beaming."

As he grew happier in his career choice each day, Abdul's wife and son also came to love their new life in Los Angeles. In a few short years Abdul had saved enough money to buy their first home. A savvy investor, he went on to purchase other property which kept the family in a good financial position throughout the years. Despite his earnings in other ventures, Abdul's heart and soul was always in Los Angeles. S. Hope Street. Even today it is with a heavy heart that Abdul bids us farewell as he moves to his next adventure back in India, something he planned to do two years ago but found it difficult to leave the Building.

Abdul has other aspirations in retirement. He plans to spend more time with his family that now includes four grandchildren, to continue indulging his passion for gardening and eventually to publish his memoirs.

And that we will, our Ambassador.

By Heather Ross

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