

F Post 10/17/89

## Rev. Abernathy fires back at critics

NEW YORK (AP) — The Rev. Ralph David Abernathy hit the airwaves Tuesday to attack his autobiography's critics, questioning the motives of those challenging his assertion the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. had extramarital affairs.

Abernathy appeared on NBC's "Today" show in the morning and the network's "Donahue" program in the afternoon.

Black leaders, including other former King aides such as Jesse Jackson and Andrew Young, denounced the book last week, calling for Abernathy to repudiate pas-

sages about the slain civil rights leader's personal life.

Abernathy wrote that King had a weakness for women, and that he had sexual encounters with two women and fought with a third woman the night before his 1978 assassination in Memphis, Tenn.

The critics also cited Abernathy's two recent strokes, and expressed doubts he wrote the book, "And The Walls Came Tumbling Down."

On "Today," the 63-year-old Atlanta minister said Jackson "was not honest with Martin Luther King. He wanted to fire him, and I had to

suspend him after I became the president of the SCLC," the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

"Martin was angry with Jesse because Jesse was always trying to upstage and steal some of the glamour away from Martin," Abernathy said on "Donahue."

Abernathy said the criticism from his civil rights colleagues "tells me that most of the black leaders in this country are not concerned about the movement, the poor people, the downtrodden."