

Widow of Dr. King Hopes Center Will Keep

By ROY REED

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ATLANTA, Jan. 9 — In a building on Beckwith Street here, a number of visitors spent the afternoon today with the memory of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

They listened to tape recordings of his voice, thumbed through copies of his books and inspected a collection of sculpture, paintings and photographs of him sent by admirers around the world.

Above all, they observed and listened to Coretta Scott King, his widow, who is spending a large part of her time building an institution designed to keep alive her husband's memory and ideas.

Today's event was an open house at a library that will some day be an important part of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Center.

Week-Long Observance

The open house was the beginning of a week-long observance of his birthday. Dr. King, who was assassinated on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, would have been 43 years old next Saturday.

Several popular musicians will sing at a benefit concert here Wednesday night, with the money going to the King center.

Mrs. King and Harry Belafonte, the singer, will give a free concert Saturday for prisoners at Rikers Island in New York City. Then she will conduct a showing of a film on Dr. King's life for representatives to the United Nations next Sunday at Lincoln Center.

At the moment, the most obvious part of the memorial that Mrs. King is trying to complete—against growing financial odds as his assassination recedes in the public mind—is his stark marble tomb on Auburn Avenue here.

A small eternal flame in front of the tomb is the brightest thing on an otherwise gritty street. Mrs. King hopes to revive what was once called "sweet Auburn" as the King center rises there.

'Living Memorial'

"It must be a dynamic, living memorial," she said in a recent interview in the basement office of her comfortable brick home near Atlanta University.

Her deep brown eyes glowed as she spoke of her husband and the memorial she en-



United Press International
Mrs. Coretta King

visioned. Only once or twice during the hour-and-a-half interview did her smiling face show the pain of memory.

Her friends say that the woman who once subordinated her own hopes of a career as a concert singer to the rigors of being Dr. King's wife has now, nearly four years after his death, emerged from the shadows of grief and his overwhelming personality and begun to assert herself.

There was a period after his death when she was admired for what some called her majestic presence. Later, she became the object of a little discontented murmuring, especially among some black intellectuals who chafed under what they regarded as her aloofness and who spoke of her "queen-ness," suggesting that she was still playing the role of "queen" to her husband's "king."

Amid the Mementoes

She gave no indication that she cared about any of that as she sat amid the mementoes: the books about Mohandas Gandhi, the pictures of her and her husband leading marches, a charred piece of timber from some long-ago night of terror.

"I think a man like my husband, if he should emerge at some future time in history and happened to be black, would emerge as the leader of the nation," she said.

No, she continued, she did not think Dr. King ever could have been President, he was too controversial.

"It will be 50 years before he will be properly recognized in this country," she added, without bitterness.

She regards her own role as

"an evolving one." Her first responsibility is the four children, she said.

The oldest, Yolanda, 16 years old, is a senior at Henry Grady High School, a desegregated, formerly all-white public school. The other three, Martin 3d, 14; Dexter, 10, and Bernice, 8, attend the Galloway School, a private school with only a few black children.

'Continuing Legacy'

After the children comes the King Center, "which I see as a continuing legacy of Martin Luther King Jr., as a means of institutionalizing his concept of nonviolent social change."

She was excited because she had received a second—finally acceptable—set of plans for the King center and the King memorial center park. She planned to present the design soon to Mayor Sam Massell, who had said he would try to get city and Federal money to

build the park. The entire project will cost about \$10-million.

The heart of the center will be a "freedom hall" near Dr. King's tomb, which is adjacent to Ebenezer Baptist Church, where he served as assistant to his father, the pastor.

The center will include the frame house down the street, where Dr. King was born. The proposed city park across Auburn Avenue would cover a large block and have a service center and recreation facilities.

Institute and Library

The hall will eventually house an institute for nonviolent social change and a library with documents and tape-recordings relating to the civil rights movement.

Mrs. King wants to establish the institute as soon as possible. She already has announced plans for a national boycott center that will be the first part of the institute, and ex-

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His Philosophy Alive

pects to begin hiring the boycott staff next month.

She hopes the center will serve as "a switchboard, a hub," collecting information on boycotts and sending it to others who might use it.

Mrs. King wants the institute to train teachers in nonviolent methods and philosophy and to promote the nonviolent message around the world through regional centers. She also would like to see an annual Martin Luther King Jr. nonviolent peace prize and a lecture series in his name.

The library project is underway, housed temporarily near Atlanta University. It has already collected most of the papers of Dr. King and many of those of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Congress of Racial Equality and the Black Lawyers Guild.

Fund-Raising Problems

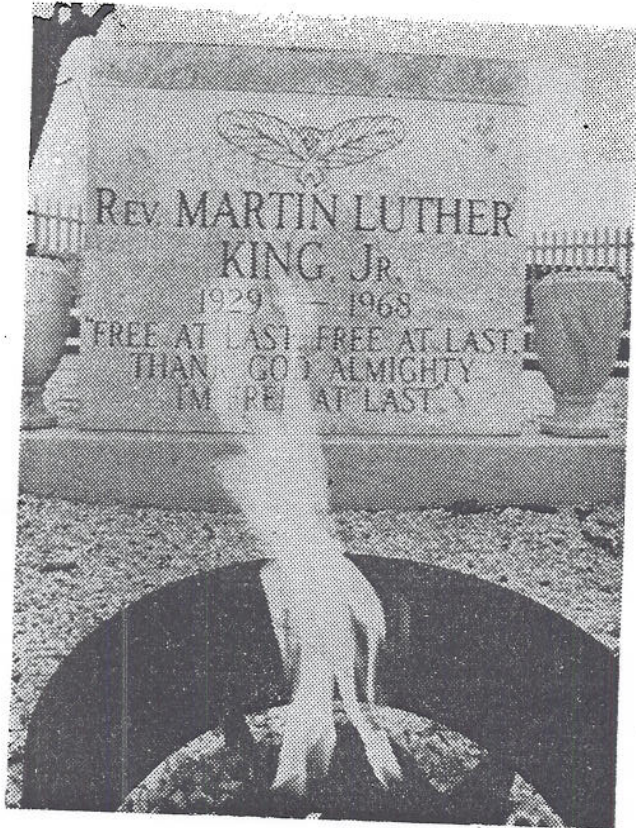
Raising money to start the

center has been a problem. Thousands of dollars were sent to Mrs. King for the memorial during the months immediately after his death, but those contributions have long since stopped coming.

She said she did not know exactly how money had been contributed for the center, but that \$300,000 to \$400,000 came in in 1970, mostly from the proceeds of a film on Dr. King's life. She also said that the center's staff would soon begin an intense fund-raising drive.

She expects to campaign for national and local candidates in next year's election, but has not announced her choice for the Presidency.

And she is still working to have her husband's birthday declared a national holiday. There are booths in some New York City subway stations where people can sign petitions supporting that.



The New York Times

Flame at tomb of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.