

Shy, Devout Person

Mrs. King Shunned Limelight

By Kathryn Johnson

Associated Press

ATLANTA, June 30—Mrs. Martin Luther King Sr. was a quiet, devout woman who kept out of the limelight during the years her son preached nonviolence from the pulpit of the Ebenezer Baptist Church.

Today, the 69-year-old Mrs. King was seated at the organ of the church when the intonation of the Lord's Prayer by the choir was interrupted by shots.

Two of her nine grandchildren were among the congregation as a young black man opened fire. Mrs. King and a male member of the congregation were killed and another woman was wounded.

Mrs. King was shot in the same simple, red brick church in which the nation's great gathered to mourn the death of her son, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was assassinated April 4, 1968.

Mrs. King, the former Alberta Christine Williams, never gave interviews during the historic years when her son preached his non-violent doctrine and led civil rights marches.

A shy, reserved person, she simply bowed her head and nodded when Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia spoke to her after he had placed a wreath on her son's tomb in 1969.

A victim of violence, she was no stranger to tragedy. Less than 16 months after King Jr. was slain, her second and last son, A. D. King, drowned in the backyard swimming pool of his home in Atlanta.

Her two sons left nine fatherless grandchildren and



ALBERTA WILLIAMS KING
... no stranger to tragedy

she and "Daddy King" devoted themselves to them. King Sr., who often preaches at Ebenezer, did not deliver the sermon today. He was coming into the church when his wife was shot.

"We live for the grandchildren," she and her husband often said. King Jr. left four: Yolanda, who attends Smith College, Martin Luther King III, Dexter and Bernice. A. D. King had five children, two of whom the elder Kings were putting through college. They have one great grandchild.

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This is the organ Mrs. King was playing when she was shot.



United Press International

Alberta Williams King and her husband at the funeral of their son, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in 1968.

Mrs. King Led Life Away From Spotlight

VICTIM, From A1

Mrs. King was the daughter of a Baptist minister, the late Rev. A. D. Williams. She married King Sr., who was the son of a sharecropper, in Atlanta nearly 50 years ago and their three children were born in a simple, white frame house a blocks from Ebenezer Baptist Church.

She had only one living child, Christine, who is married to Isaac Farris of Atlanta. Mrs. Farris is an assistant professor of education at Spelman College.

More than 1,000 persons gathered in Atlanta in December, 1970, to honor the elder Kings at a testimonial dinner marking King's 70th birthday.

Throughout the evening "Mama King" dabbed her eyes while the robust King Sr. vacillated between outbursts of laughter and quiet moments of humility while friends and celebrities from across the nation filed

across the podium to pay them tribute.

Mrs. King never made speeches, but her daughter-in-law, Coretta Scott King, spoke for her.

"Mama and Daddy King represent the best in manhood and womanhood, the best in a marriage, the kind of people we are trying to become," said the widow of the younger King.

"What we have achieved in the human struggle for freedom, we couldn't have done without the help of these two people who happen to be my parents also," she said of her in-laws.

In his book, "Stride Toward Freedom," Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote: "My mother, as the daughter of a successful minister, had grown up in comparative comfort. She had been sent to the best available school and college and had, in general, been protected from the worst blights of discrimination."