

Coretta

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'Oh, yes, I've heard some very nice things about you also.' That was all Martin needed to begin talking, very easily and very smoothly. I had never heard such talk in my life. He said, 'You know every Napoleon has his Waterloo. I'm like Napoleon, I'm at my Waterloo, and I'm on my knees.'

They agreed to meet for lunch the next day. At first, King put her off because he had another Napoleon quality — he was short.

"I was rather self-conscious but tried not to react too much, to remain as poised as I usually was," she recounted. "It was a little difficult, for in those few minutes I had forgotten about Martin being short and had completely revised my first impression. He radiated charm. When he talked, he grew in stature. Even when he was so young, he drew people to him from the very first moment with his eloquence, his sincerity, and his moral stature. I knew immediately that he was very special."

So special that the two married on June 18, 1953, in her hometown. But the wedding didn't take place until after Coretta demanded — and got — the removal of the section of their wedding vows promising that she would obey her new husband.

Two years after the wedding, Dr. King would find himself leading a bus boycott in Montgomery, Ala.

On Jan. 30, 1956, Coretta King was home with their 1-year-old daughter, Yolanda, when a bomb was tossed into the house. Neither was hurt, but she experienced firsthand the dangers of challenging America's version of apartheid.

Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) said in an interview on ABC's "Good Morning America":

"In an area where our founding fathers failed — founding fathers wrote slavery into the Constitution. We fought a civil war, but it wasn't really until we had Dr. King and Coretta Scott King in the '50s that awakened the conscience of the nation so the political leadership of the early '60s could begin what I call the march to progress, that of knocking down walls of discrimination on race, religion, ethnicity and gender, and disability. And we have benefited so much from their leadership and from their inspiration."

Coretta Scott King

marched with her husband in Birmingham, Ala., and other hot spots, but yearned for a larger role in the movement. However, according to King's biographers, the civil rights leader held traditional unenlightened male views of that era, believing his wife should primarily take care of their children.

She actively supported the movement, her husband and took care of their kids at the same time.

"I've had the good opportunity to get to know the children over the years, and I have seen the time that they have spent with their mother," Kennedy said in the interview. "The mother was not only a powerful and charismatic figure and leader for our time, but she helped those children grow up to be individuals with a sense of dignity, a sense of pride in their heritage, and their strong commitment to do something for someone else. I admire her for that, as well."

Myrlie Evers Williams, whose husband, Medgar, was assassinated in Mississippi, understands the burden that Coretta King carried, and in a statement said: "I was saddened to learn about the passing of my personal, very special friend, Coretta Scott King."

Evers Williams shared a deeply personal observation: "She and I, along with Betty Shabazz, were members of a club that no one wants to join — the 'widow of.'"

"We shared the challenges of raising our children without their fathers; we shared the challenges of bearing our husbands' legacies with dignity; we shared the challenges of the ever-shifting Civil Rights Movement. And, through it all, she maintained her graciousness while impacting the world's politics with her strength and sophisticated influence."

In an interview with *Playboy* magazine, Dr. King noted that he traveled 325,000 miles a year, giving 450 speeches. Along with that grueling schedule came constant harassment by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, who ordered the bugging of King's home, office and hotel rooms. The FBI sent tape recordings of what it said was King engaging in sex with women outside of his marriage. The bureau sent copies of the tapes to Dr. King's home and office, but the move to discredit King never caused the couple to part.

Coretta Scott King had been in failing health since

last August, when she suffered a stroke and a heart attack. She missed the annual King Day celebration this year for the first time, but attended the Trumpet Awards, honoring outstanding African-Americans, a week later in Atlanta.

Julian Bond, chairman of the NAACP's board of directors, noted: "Coretta Scott King was her husband's partner in life; after his death, she was a fierce protector of his legacy and a promoter of nonviolence."

Indeed, after King was assassinated in Memphis on April 4, 1968, she picked up the King mantle and emerged as an international leader in her own right. She completed his planned Poor Peoples March to Washington and met with such international figures as Nelson Mandela, Pope John Paul II, Bishop Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama.

Her most lasting physical legacy remains the Martin

Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, though it has been mired in recent years by allegations of mismanagement. The family has been bitterly split over whether to sell the center to the National Park Service or maintain it as an independent entity.

There is no division over the federal Martin Luther King holiday, the third Monday of every January, that came about in 1983 as a result of Coretta King's tireless campaign. After Ronald Reagan, who initially opposed the federal holiday, signed the bill into law, she spoke of her husband's lasting contributions.

"All right-thinking people, all right-thinking Americans are joined in spirit with us this day as the highest recognition this nation gives is bestowed on Martin Luther King Jr.," she said. "He symbolized what was right about America, what was noblest, and what was

best. His non-violent campaign brought about redemption, reconciliation and justice."

She continued that legacy for 38 years after his death.

"I knew Coretta for more than 40 years," Jesse L. Jackson Sr., a former King aide who first notified her of King's assassination, said in a statement. "To observe her handle the highs and lows of life with dignity was a lesson, watching someone master fate with faith. She endured pain with unusual strength and character. She helped to carry the baton of that struggle for the rest of her life. She single-handedly built the King Center; more than that, her voice for justice at home and peace in the world remained a constant."

Jackson continued, "Whether it was for Aristide to return to Haiti, or for the freedom of Mandela in South Africa, or to end the unjust and unnecessary wars, she sustained the legacy of hope

and healing and nonviolence, as a tactic and a way of life for herself and her husband. Hers was a voice that will now reverberate throughout the ages."

Charles Steele Jr., president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, said: "Mrs. Coretta Scott King, the widow of our founding president, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was a national and international treasure who was also still a faithful and dedicated servant as a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) since the mid-1970s."

"... We shall take note and forever appreciate her regal elegance and special contributions she provided the Civil Rights Movement."

In an interview on NBC's "Today" show, former King aide and two-time Atlanta mayor Andrew Young said, "Her spirit will remain with us just as her husband's has."

Your Horoscope Says... Feb. 2-Feb. 8

ARIES

You can fly through the week if you keep your level of cooperation high. By this week's end, you'll have many plans, romantic and otherwise for the time period. Be patient at the workplace and things will go fine.

Soul Affirmation: I take it easy on myself this week.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 6, 43

TAURUS

You may feel as if you'll never get everything done that's asked of you, but stay steady and on course, take things one step at time, and you'll be amazed at what you accomplish. Celebrate with a special friend.

Soul Affirmation: This week is a gift that I deserve.

Lucky Numbers: 10, 20, 38

GEMINI

It's a great week for catching up on chores and leftover tasks from last week. You'll also have the opportunity to spend some time thinking about the direction you want your life to flow toward.

Soul Affirmation: I face each day with a smile and the day smiles back at me.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 6, 8

CANCER

Communication vibes are highlighted, and you are in your element. Many ideas will be presented, and everyone will be very receptive and agreeable to what you say. Romantic interests are easily pursued this week. Smile on!

Soul Affirmation: The slowness of my pace gives me time to refresh my energy.

Lucky Numbers: 17, 49, 51

LEO

Love and romance vibes are all around you this week! They will soothe your spirit and uncoil your tensions resulting from having too much work to do. Delegate some of the minor tasks so that you can do your best at the big stuff. Have a loving, lovely week.

Soul Affirmation: New intuitions create new plans and a new cast of characters.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 5, 16

VIRGO

Financial matters are highlighted during working hours. Everything to do with your money, or money under your care, goes smoothly. Another party invitation arrives... say YES!

Soul Affirmation: I admit what I really want out of life this week.

Lucky Numbers: 14, 22, 36

LIBRA

If you are finding it hard to concentrate on a project at work, begin imagining it successfully completed. Work steady and stay calm this week. This week is a good time for personal inventory.

Soul Affirmation: I will take time to enjoy the simple things in life.

Lucky Numbers: 11, 33, 44

SCORPIO

Exercise prudence this week in your handling of personal funds. Let your mind wander into the future and you'll receive the happy answer that you are looking for. Time shared with a partner at night during the week will be very enjoyable.

Soul Affirmation: Helping others is the true measure of my worth.

Lucky Numbers: 13, 15, 20

SAGITTARIUS

Work with a partner or colleagues goes exceptionally well this week. You receive praise for a job well done. Feel free to change your mind regarding a personal issue. News from a distance arrives.

Soul Affirmation: I go inside myself to find peace and joy this week.

Lucky Numbers: 12, 16, 24

CAPRICORN

A relationship may be heating up. Make sure you know what you want, then go ahead. Minor challenges on the home front are easily dealt with. You are a superstar at work. Efficiency seems to be your middle name. As you go your charming way, don't forget to delegate tasks with a smile.

Soul Affirmation: The widest outlook comes from the look within.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 10, 34

AQUARIUS

You make important progress at work this week by seizing the initiative and letting your leadership abilities shine. What you do makes things better for everyone around you, so rock steady. Meetings and conversations go especially well.

Soul Affirmation: The word is in me. I bring it forth.

Lucky Numbers: 10, 31, 42

PISCES

Things are going your way in wonderful ways this week. Happy news may arrive from a distance, and on the home front, a romantic question may be answered. Friends are glad to be with you. All in all, a very pleasant week. Enjoy!

Soul Affirmation: Success is mine because I feel successful.

Lucky Numbers: 44, 51, 55