

Upon his arrival, King checked into the Negro-owned Lorraine Motel.

Across from the Lorraine was the rooming house where the assassin who called himself John Willard (later identified as James Earl Ray), paid for a room directly across from King's motel room. On April 4, 1968, King walked onto the second floor balcony to talk with co-workers and enjoy the evening air. At 7:02 p.m., a single shot from the sniper's rifle exploded into King's neck, severing his spinal cord. Within an hour of the shooting, King, 39, was pronounced dead at St. Joseph's Hospital. His death was the 12th major assassination in the civil rights struggle since 1963.

A photograph showing King as he was carried from the motel balcony was an inset to the article. Another photograph accompanying the article, showing King talking with co-worker Jesse Jackson, was taken minutes before his death.

One of King's aides, Hosea Williams, said that King told him a few hours before he was killed that "he had conquered the fear of death." *Time's* coverage of King's last speech gave use of excellent quotes and remarkable foreshadowing.

The night before his death, King spoke to a crowd of thousands at Mason Street Temple. King said there had been death threats made

on his life, "but it really doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. And I've looked over ... and I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know that we as a people will get to the promised land. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."

King's premonition was deadly accurate. Twenty-four hours after his final speech, Memphis' garbage collectors still had unresolved grievances and King's staffers vowed to continue King's last crusade. King's successor, Rev. Ralph Abernathy, led a silent, non-violent protest Monday, April 8, the day before King's funeral in Atlanta.

It was fitting that King's death came during a mission in which he tried to assist a group of people seeking to improve some aspect of their lives by securing their rights. Twelve years earlier he had begun his ascent in the civil rights movement, galvanizing the Black population of Montgomery during the bus boycott.

In the article "Visions of the Promised Land," *Time* did a special feature on King's eloquent rhetoric. It highlighted his desires for nonviolence in "Letter From Birmingham Jail" in 1963, his dreams of peace and freedom in 1964, his views on Black Power in

1967, and his feelings of his own future in 1968. Some of King's most famous and moving statements were presented in this article.

*Time* reported in its television section that within hours after the assassination, all major networks had assembled well-balanced footage of King's life from childhood to his death.

"March On" headlined *Time's* editorial page on April 19. John Dane from Connecticut wrote, "Whites feel not only horror, but shame at the tragic death of Dr. King. But there is a group that should feel infinitely more shame, and it is that minority of Black militants and their followers. Their actions are not only making sure that Dr. King died in vain, but making sure that his whole life was in vain." A pastor from Iowa simply asked, "Why must we always kill our prophets before we listen to them?"

Now began the rites of martyrdom, the eulogies, memorials, riots and tears. Now began unprecedented tributes and the postponement of the baseball season and the Academy Awards. Now began King's promise of new life.

By the end of the week, King's assassination and the tragic consequences it provoked all but obscured the earlier developments toward peace in Vietnam. Throughout the nation, flags flew at half-staff in honor of the martyred leader and dignitaries from all over the country began trickling into Atlanta for his funeral.

*Time* stated that not since the funeral of John F. Kennedy four and a half years earlier had the nation been so deeply involved in mourning. In Atlanta, there were 200,000 black and white mourners at the memorial services. An estimated 120 million viewers watched the funeral on television, which lasted more than three hours, twice as long as President Kennedy's. It was King's last march.

The televised services were the first opportunity for millions of white Americans to observe the spirit of black Americans' Christian faith.

Celebrities and "little people" alike attended memorial services at King's alma mater, Morehouse College, and the funeral at Ebenezer Baptist Church, where King was the pastor. King's own taped voice rose from an empty pulpit as spirituals were sung by a tearful choir. King's successor, Rev. Abernathy, led in the eulogies.

Near the end of the funeral, a tape of a sermon King had given that February was played.

"If any of you are around when I have to meet my day, I don't want a long funeral, and if you get somebody to deliver the eulogy tell him... to mention that day that Martin Luther King Jr. tried to give his life serving others. I'd like for somebody to say that day that Martin Luther King Jr. tried to love somebody."

*Time's* April 19 issue also featured four pages of emotional photographs. The photographs included marchers walking behind King's casket, carried by a mule-drawn wagon, services in Ebenezer Baptist Church and shots of the slain leader's widow, Coretta, maintaining complete composure.

The magazine did a profile on

groes saw rioting as an opportunity to force white store owners out of the ghetto. One looter said, "His death just gave us an excuse."

But the outbreak of violence made a mockery of everything that King's life, and death, had stood for.

*Time* reported that throughout the U.S. there were 5,117 fires, 1,928 homes and stores ransacked, 23,987 people arrested and \$39,544,205 in damage to property. In all, 72,800 federal troops were called to duty.

Much of the riot activities went unopposed and rarely did police and federal troops interfere. The restraint may have resulted in part from the president's Kerner Commission report and the sense of guilt whites felt over King's death.

## Cover Story

Coretta Scott King titled "You're Such a Brave Lady..." *Time* reported that Mrs. King had portrayed the images of contained grief and total self-control all throughout the services. "The movement had lost a leader and found in his widow a new source of strength."

The end of King's life put President Johnson at center stage of the political arena once more. After meeting with black leaders at the White House, Johnson went on television to condemn domestic racial violence and issue a fresh call for unity.

On the day King was buried, with federal troops still standing guard on the Capitol steps, Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1968. The law contained two anti-riot clauses and language protecting the constitutional rights for Native Americans. But like previous civil rights laws, the Act of 1968 had the danger of promising too much while providing too little. NAACP officials said, "The bill does nothing directly to conquer prejudice or poverty." Although the bill covered 80 percent of America's housing market, it would not help Negroes' economic problems until 1970.

For too many blacks, King's death could only be viewed as a judgment on his nonviolent philosophy and a purpose for retaliation. Black militants used his murder to say that the civil rights movement was dead. But they had said it long before his death. Ne-

Whatever the reason, 43 deaths occurred as a result of rioting.

On April 26, *Time* provided more coverage on King's assassin than any other topic concerning King's death. The three-page article, "Who Killed King," was an in-depth story about James Earl Ray, the suspected killer. *Time* stated that the world had hardly known of King's death before speculation began that he was a victim of a well-planned conspiracy.

*Time* also announced that the Memphis garbage workers had agreed upon a 14-month settlement with city officials that included a grievance procedure, a system of merit promotions and a 9 percent pay increase.

"Challenging Pharaoh," was the slogan of the Poor People's Campaign, King's last crusade for civil rights. *Time* reported on May 17 that 12,000 marchers from the nation's slums and ghettos met in Washington, D.C. to erect a settlement called "Resurrection City." March coordinator Hosea Williams said, "These white folks killed the dream, but we're gonna show these white folks what became of the dream."

A *Time* Essay, "What Can I Do?," focused on what whites could do to help black America in its fight for civil rights. "If the country's race problem is curable, the cure is going to be found in a

see "Time Coverage," p. 12

