

Residents call King's visit unforgettable

April 13, 1962: The day Dr. King graced Winston-Salem

Chronicle Staff
The day was April 13, 1962. It was a rather somber day. Exactly what one would expect in April. Temperatures, according to the National Weather Service, reached a high of 56 degrees and light rain added to the dismal day. Later on that evening temperatures dropped to 48 degrees, but it was still considered a pretty typical day for the spring season.

were carried to the very heavens by him," he added.
Other residents expressed similar feelings of excitement after hearing King speak at the rally. "It was a feeling that I can never describe in words," said County Commissioner Earline Parmon and director of LIFT program. "The thing that impressed me the most was the closeness of the people. The importance of having someone in the city of that magnitude. It was such a feeling . . . It's

unexplainable," she said from her office on Highland Avenue. "I remember thinking he was arrested and put in jail. She said, she knew then that he was a different type of leader and she knew he

"I remember thinking he was the next best thing to God. He was the ultimate person . . . the impact was great on me."

— By Earline Parmon



This historic marker sits at the top of the Goler Metropolitan AME Zion Church steps, commemorating Dr. King's visit to Winston-Salem in 1962.

But that Monday night in Winston-Salem was not at all "typical." For it was the day Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. — internationally known civil rights leader — would speak in front of a packed audience at Goler Metropolitan AME Zion Church, located on Fourth and Dunlieth Streets, and leave the city and its residents with memories engraved in their hearts and minds.

According to newspaper clippings from the Winston-Salem Journal and Sentinel, King had arrived in town to discuss the "power of the ballot" and address the Voter Registration Project Committee rally scheduled for 8 p.m.

But residents who attended the rally and recall that Monday night said King's speech encompassed more than the voter registration campaign, it included talk of freedom, justice and equality in America — making that night one they'll never forget.

"It was a day that surpassed all expectations. It was one of positive resolve for what he had to deliver to a people. You were exhilarated when you heard the man," said Daniel W. Andrews Jr. of D.W. Andrews Jr. & Sons Plumbing Services on Excelsior Street.

Andrews, who was 38 years old at the time of King's visit, said King's presence in the city, especially during the 1960's, really conjured up a closeness in the black community. "It was just an eye-awakening experience," he said.

Andrews, a member of Goler Metropolitan AME Zion Church, was also a choir member at the time of King's visit.

"I shall never forget that day. We sang an arranged spiritual of 'Rocka' Mah Soul.' I sang the solo," he said, as he belted out a few verses of the spiritual. Andrews said King's speech centered around talks of peaceful demonstrations, the closeness of Christians and true understanding of what the fight for civil rights was really about. "It was so forceful."

As president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the nation's leading advocate of nonviolent protests against racial discrimination, King's speech focused on the right to vote as part of the voter registration project co-sponsored by the local chapter of the NAACP and the Congress of Racial Equality.

Andrews said he also recalled the massive number of people that packed the church that day. "It was a jammed packed crowd." The experience, Andrews admits, was something "I'll never forget."

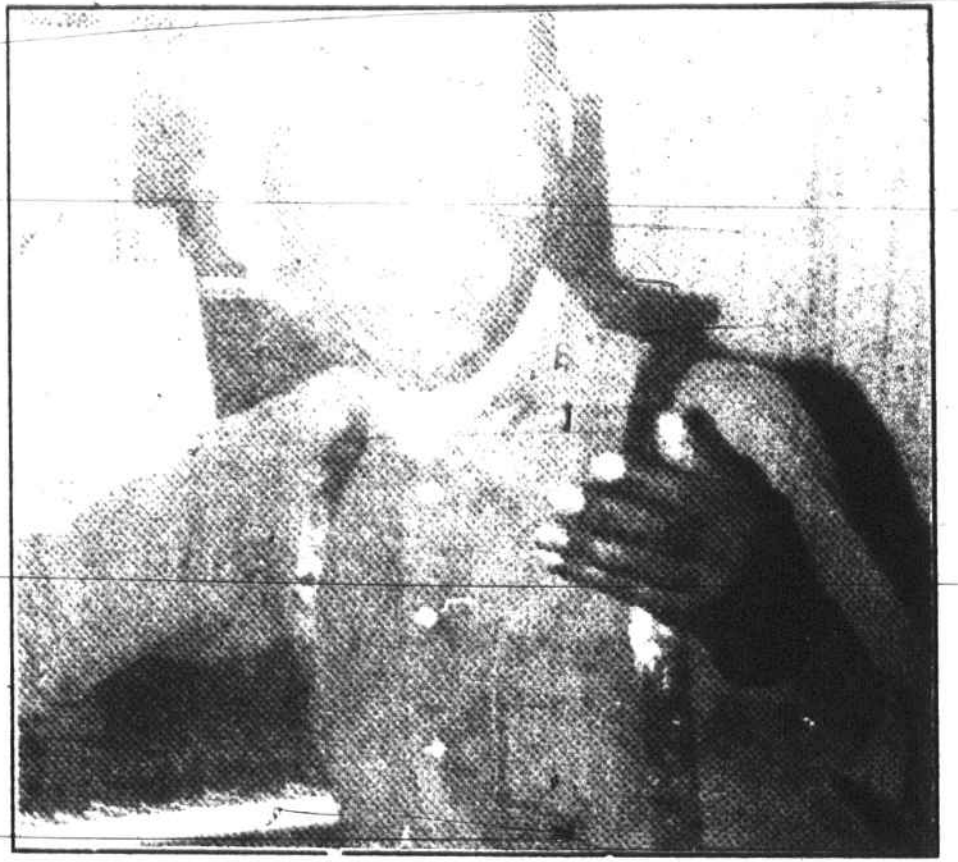
"He was an international leader. And his dream is a dream that's continuing to live on. Look at Russia and South Africa, they're also saying 'We shall overcome.' He's touched other people all over the world and other philosophies have been born out of what he said. The message still rings. He said he saw over into the promise land, and I truly believe he did. The man had an effect on the spiritual pod. You

the next best thing to God. He was the ultimate person," she said. Parmon was 18 years old that day when she got her first opportunity to hear Dr. King. "The impact was great on me. Everything that evening was so impressive," she said, while searching for words to recapture the day. "I had taken part in some of the marches and sit-ins since I was around 16 or 17 (years-old), but this was the thing that really made me know what I wanted to do for my community. I had made up my mind."

Parmon said she also remembers hearing that Dr. King had been

had in some way touched her life. Parmon said she doesn't remember how she heard about the event, but she had managed to tag along with Velma Hopkins, a well-known community activist in Winston-Salem.

Hopkins, now 82 years old, is a volunteer at the Exodus Enrichment Center on 17th Street and said she has spent more than 40 years working in the community. The native of Winston-Salem said she had worked with Dr. King on many occasions. "I use to follow him around. I went to Washington for the big speech and I visited Atlanta."



Daniel W. Andrews, a member of Goler Metropolitan Choir in 1962, remembers that Monday night when he sang the solo of 'Rocka' Mah Soul spiritual to a captive audience.

While Hopkins said she could hardly remember the 1962 trip, she did remember the effect King had on all who met him. "I remember he was a down to earth man. And he kept everyone's feet in the grass. He

wasn't a man who was big on I's and little U's."

"I think Dr. King did a beautiful job. He was a God-sent man. And what ever happened, he will always be Dr. Martin Luther King."

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

MLK Jr.



Illustration by J. Scribbles

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream begins with all of us. And Pepsi shares the celebration of that dream.



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MLK Jr. "I Have A Dream Speech," August 28, 1963, Washington, D.C.