



AP Photo

Maya Angelou speaks at the funeral of her friend, Coretta Scott King.

## Angelou

from Page 12

More recently, Angelou was deeply saddened by the death of King's widow, Coretta Scott King, who passed away Jan. 30, 2006, at age 78.

"So many of my very close and beloved friends and relatives have gone off to what Shakespeare called that, 'undiscovered country,'" Angelou said.

Angelou sat among four U.S. presidents — Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, George H.W. Bush and President George W. Bush — as she waited her turn to the speak to the 10,000 people who gathered for Mrs. King's Atlanta funeral. She described to the crowd the special bond she shared with Mrs. King.

"Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated on my birthday. And for over 30 years, Coretta Scott King and I have telephoned or sent cards to each other, or flowers to each other, or met each other somewhere in the world," Angelou said at the service. "We called ourselves 'chosen sisters' and when we traveled to South Africa or to the Caribbean, or when she came to visit me in North Carolina or in New York, we sat into the late evening hours, calling each other 'girl.' It's a black woman thing, you know. And even as we reached well into our 70th decade, we still said 'girl.'"

Angelou attributes her own longevity to God's good grace and the love she receives and gives to others.

"I think you should work hard, and I think you should play hard and, be daring and be courageous enough to love someone and lots of people, and have enough courage to accept love in return," Angelou said about her keys to a long life.

Loving and her gift of the spoken and written word have earned Angelou the adoration of millions, including that of many well-known people. She counts talk-show host Oprah Winfrey as one of her closest friends. Earlier this month,

Winfrey threw a lavish three-day 80th birthday celebration for Angelou in posh Palm Beach. The talk-show queen hosted similar bashes on Angelou's 70th and 75th birthdays.

But Angelou says every gift she receives — big or small, birthday or not — is special.

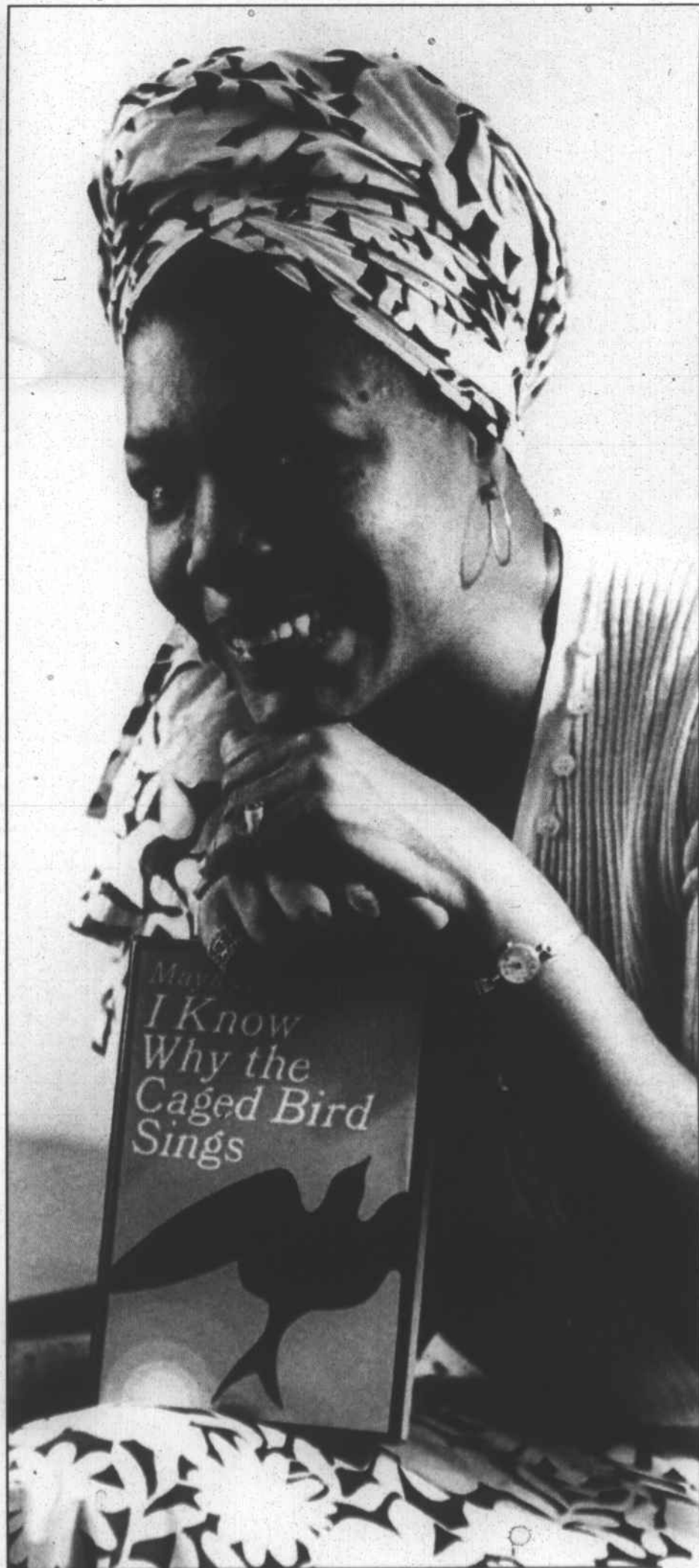
"The handkerchief, which is given to me, or the expensive purse ... they all are about the same. It is the love that counts," she said. "I have so much love, and I am so grateful for it. But there is an equal commitment, responsibility. So to receive that much love, I must give that much love or more, and I must live a certain kind of life."

These days, much of her extraordinary life is lived right here in Winston-Salem. Work brought Angelou to the Twin City in 1981. She was appointed the very first Reynolds Professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University, a lifetime position. Her classes are among the most sought after at the school. Those lucky enough to get a seat, are quickly memorized by Angelou, who in one breath can quote Paul Lawrence Dunbar (one of her favorite poets), and talk-show host Art Linkletter in the next.

She travels the world delivering speeches on college campuses, reciting poetry before world leaders and spending weeks at her Harlem brownstone, but when Angelou announces to friends and loved ones that she is going home, they know what she means.

"This is where I come to relax and where I come to work, and whenever I say I am coming home, I mean I am coming to Winston-Salem," she said.

She takes pride in being an active resident of the city. During her early years in Winston-Salem, she joined local activists in calling attention to the Darryl Hunt case. Hunt, a black man, spent nearly 20 years in prison, after being convicted of raping and killing a white woman. DNA eventually won him



AP Photo

Maya Angelou, pictured here in the 1970s, holds her first book.

See Angelou on Page 18