

22 June  
1957

From George D. Kelsey

22 June 1957  
Madison, N.J.

*One of King's Morehouse professors congratulates him on recent honors and accomplishments.<sup>1</sup> King acknowledged Kelsey's letter on 8 July.*

Dr. M. L. King  
Dexter Avenue Baptist Church  
Montgomery, Alabama

Dear M. L.,

Congratulations on all the honors which you have won recently, and during the last year. You have done wonderful things for all the people. Many White Christians recognize that you have served them, but in the future this fact will be commonly understood.

Leola and I were delighted to see and hear you in Philadelphia. We wish we could have had a long talk.<sup>2</sup>

We followed the Ted Poston series on you in the New York Post. Of course, I am deeply pleased to learn that I have had any influence on your life.<sup>3</sup>

The final question which Poston raises, "where do you go from here?" is, as you indicated, not a matter of primary concern to you. It cannot be for two reasons. 1) A man of your training and qualifications is always in demand. There is always a need for him to meet. And the call for his services is continuously forthcoming. 2) A man of your consecration is not concerned with his own honors or with any dramatic and spectacular accomplishments which may be associated with his name. He is concerned rather with ministering to and meeting the needs of men in Christ's name. This is why you have wrought great things. To you it does not matter whether there are "rabbits to be pulled out of the hat." But it does matter that the least person in your midst needs a cup of cool water. To him you have directed your ministry.<sup>4</sup>

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1. George D. Kelsey (1910–1996).

2. Kelsey and his wife, Leola, may have heard King speak in Philadelphia on 19 May at Zion Baptist Church or at the 20 May annual forum of the National Conference on Social Welfare.

3. Poston's six-part profile (8–12, 14 April 1957) chronicled King's life from childhood to his emergence as a national leader. In the third installment, King said of Kelsey and Benjamin Mays: "I could see in their lives the ideal of what I wanted a real minister to be" (Poston, "Fighting Pastor: Martin Luther King," *New York Post*, 10 April 1957).

4. In Poston's final article, King reflected on achieving fame at such a young age: "Frankly, I'm worried to death. . . . People will be expecting me to pull rabbits out of the hat for the rest of my life. If I don't or there are no rabbits to be pulled, then they'll say I'm no good" ("Where Does He Go From Here?" *New York Post*, 14 April 1957). In his 8 July reply to Kelsey, King commented: "I am deeply grateful to you for your very encouraging words and helpful suggestions. The statements you made on the question, 'Where do you go from here' were helpful indeed. They are very vital in keeping a sense of direction."

## Fighting Pastor

# Martin Luther King

By **TED POSTON**

*New York Post Correspondent*

Article 1

Montgomery, Ala., April 8—The Martin Luther King Jr. story is a saga which almost ended shortly after it began in Atlanta, Ga.

Some 22 years ago, before little Mike King was even 6, he was playing alone in the second floor hallway of the comfortable 13-room frame house at 501 Auburn Av. where he had been born on Jan. 15, 1929.

As he leaned over the upstairs banister, he suddenly lost his footing and plunged head first some 20 feet to the ground floor and then catapulted through an open cellar door to the basement.

**He got up and walked away unscratched.**

A few years later when he was pedaling his bike down Auburn Av., a speeding car shot out of a side street, hit the bike's back wheel and hurled young King over on the sidewalk.

**He picked up his broken bike and walked it back home.**

And six months later, while he was again out cycling, another motorist struck the bike from behind, hurling young Mike over the handlebars and eight feet away. He landed on his head.

**He got up and walked home to report plaintively that his bike had been smashed.**

Some worshipful followers of the 28-year-old minister who was thrust into international fame by his astute leadership of the successful Montgomery bus boycott movement tend to see in these incidents the hand of Divine Providence.

"The Lord had his hand on him even then," one elderly Montgomery domestic who knew of only one of these incidents remarked last May while she and 50,000 other Negroes were trudging to and from work during the bus boycotts. "He was saving him for us. No harm could come to him."

Young King himself is amused by such interpretations, although he will add with a twinkle in his slightly-slanted eyes:

"Well, I guess God was looking out for me even then. He must have given me a hard head just for that purpose."

And Alfred Daniel King, Martin's younger brother, agrees.

"He always had a hard head all right," said A. D., who entered the ministry last



December as assistant pastor at their father's Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, "and I have reason to know.

"We were playing baseball one day and I was at bat while M. L. was catching. I took a real hefty all-around swing at a pitch and the bat flew out of my hand. It caught him on the right side of the head and I thought I'd killed him sure.

"But he was up right away, and arguing. that I was out because I'd missed on a

*Continued on Page 42*

First article in Ted Poston's six-part series on King in the *New York Post* (8 April 1957)

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227  
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The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

28 June        We shall continue to pray for your success and well being, and shall send our  
1957            meager financial help when that is needed.

                With best wishes and kindest personal regards, I am

Cordially yours,  
[*signed*] George  
George D. Kelsey

GDK/lk

TLS. MLKP-MBU: Box 3A.