

# TO THE MOUNTAIN TOP

by John Wolfe

*"...and I may not be there with you..." Words spoken by a man who within 24 hours of forecasting his own demise, would pass from this earth and into a legacy for a generation of people who believe in equal rights, justice, and peace.*

To me, those words signal images of freedom marches, bloodshed, and martyrdom. When one individual can stand out among many...when one person's voice can be heard above the tumultuous sounds of desperate, angry, frustrated millions...it is awe inspiring!

Martin Luther, Jr. Took on mythical proportions to me during those fiery and intense times of the 1960's. I was twelve years old at the time of his assassination.

*I had already seen and heard the rhetoric of countless reformers, despots, radicals and 'klansmen'. And yet not one could reach into the collective consciousness of so many different people, and capture the essence of our imaginations, hopes, and the intangible 'dreams' we intergenerationally shared.*

In truth, his eloquent, melodic, 'call and response' style of oratory expressiveness, took the nation if not the world by surprise! Here, was a young, handsome, educated, devoutly religious southern black man.

The son of a 'preacher' who himself was the son of a slave. Images of a fiery evangelist shouting out scripture and moral righteousness from behind a pulpit, within a cavernous woodshed Baptist church, complete with wailing, sweat soaked former slaves and sons and daughters of slaves, made for an even more compelling story in which this man played the 'leading role'. It would be decades later before many of us would realize the enormous burden of responsibility which the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Truly carried.

But not then. The last four years of his life were a 'picture show' of magical moments and events! Each speech, march, and jail cell in which he proudly took his seat, became another headline...another phrase to a song, which he and only he could sing! He electrified the world populace by his acts of defiance, in direct opposition to the ugly spectre of racism and bigotry, which the United States had so adroitly managed to circumvent over generations of time. King would continue to push, clarify, question, and tear down the lingering legacy of the south's oppressive antebellum social caste system. And his crusade would spread further than anyone could ever imagine.

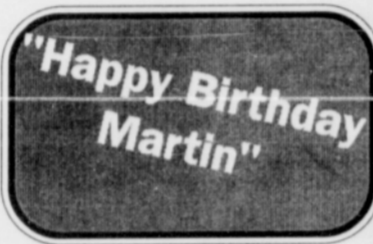
I often wondered what thoughts ran through the mind of this 'prince of peace'. I so often wondered, at which point did he fully realize that his life would have to come to an abrupt end, in order for the lives of the oppressed to continue. The recent barrage of information regarding King's life, complete with the drama of his reported dalliances and moments of frustration and fear, only serve to illuminate the reality of the life of this

one man...a descendant of slaves...a father, a husband, a friend to someone.

The rhythm of his words remain implanted in my mind. I need only see his picture, or hear a sentence from a speech, to have the 'magic' of this man's legacy consume me. The power of his martyrdom, for the freedom and justice of the African-American, and of all people, will forever find a safe harbor within my heart and soul.

So if it is Martin, as you so bravely stated on that night in Tennessee before your final sacrifice, that you had been taken to the mountain top, and allowed to see the fruits of your labor on the other side; that place where children of all colors are locked hand in hand swaying to the harmony of peace; where people are judged by the content of their character, rather than the color of their skin; where all the rough edges of racism have been made smooth by the healing power of equality, respect and love...I hope...I know that you are there.

*And your gift of sacrifice, to all who follow your path, will truly lead us to 'the promise land'. Yes, Martin, indeed you had been to the Mountain Top!*



*"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."*

Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Help keep Dr. King's dream alive.**

KOIN 6

*"Love is the most durable power in the world. This creative force, so beautifully exemplified in the life of our Christ, is the most potent instrument available in mankind's quest for peace and security."*

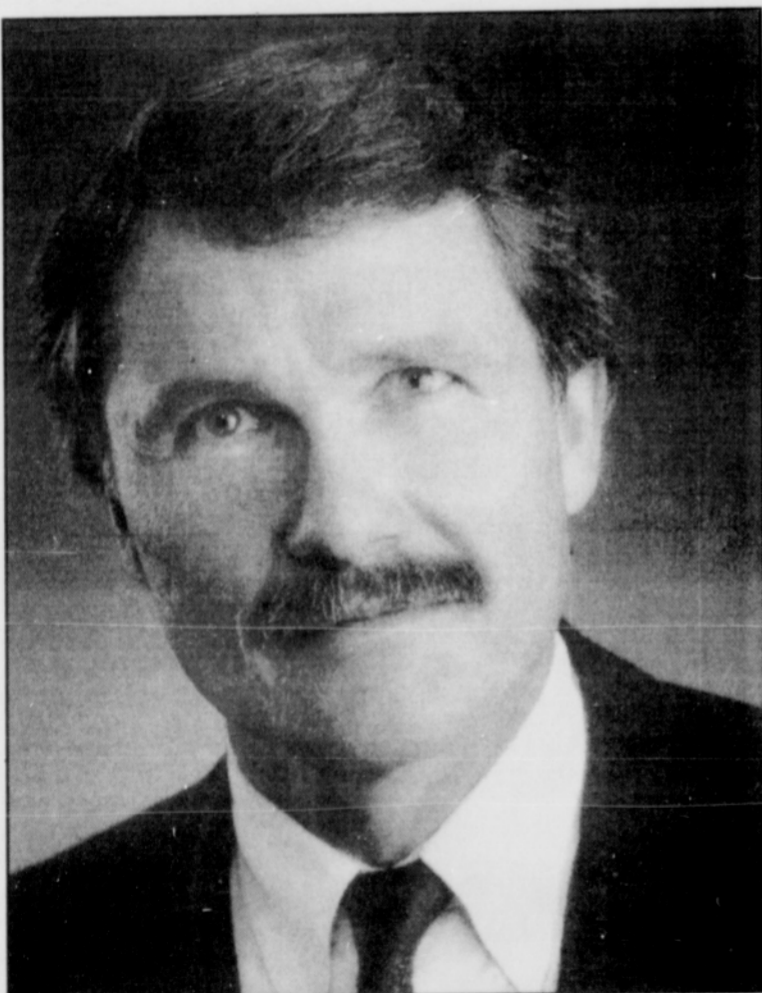
- Martin Luther King Jr.

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
STATE OF OREGON



PROCLAMATION

## Gov. Kitzhaber Honors Martin Luther King Jr.



Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber

WHEREAS: Oregon seeks to ensure racial justice, harmony and equal opportunity for all its citizens; and

WHEREAS: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a champion for equality, human rights and human dignity and the true "drum major" for justice; and

WHEREAS: His vision of equality and civil rights for all human beings provided a blueprint for action; and

WHEREAS: We honor Dr. King's life and his wish that one day all children would "... live in a nation where they will be judged not by the color of their skin, but the content of their character;" and

WHEREAS: We share his vision that all citizens must be guaranteed the unalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; and

WHEREAS: His dream of freedom and universal justice has so greatly enhanced the human condition in this state and nation; and

WHEREAS: We wish to honor Dr. King's memory and continue his fight for a better common destiny for all people.

NOW,

THEREFORE, I, John A. Kitzhaber, Governor of the State of Oregon, hereby proclaim January 20, 1997 to be

**DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY**

in Oregon and encourage all citizens to join in this observance.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I hereunto set my hand and cause the Great Seal of the State of Oregon to be affixed. Done at the Capitol in the City of Salem in the State of Oregon on this day, January 6, 1997.

John A. Kitzhaber, Governor

Phil Keisling, Secretary of State

