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Writer Felt King Doomed

By JUDY CORCORAN

Such is the tenor of a time which has bred the assassins of John Kennedy, Medgar Evers and Malcolm X that 78 days ago when I met Martin Luther King I thought for an instant:

"This is the kind of man that will be cut down by an assassin."

The thought I pushed from my mind Jan. 19 became a reality Friday.

To meet Dr. King that morning in January when he spoke at Kansas State University, I had to make him laugh. Thursday night, to escape from the reality of his violent death I had to go to the University of Kansas to hear a Negro comedian make me and several thousand others laugh.

Dr. King arrived late the day he was to speak at K-State so a

press conference had been cancelled.

I was at the airport hoping to interview him and when he stepped off the plane I started toward him, only to be cut off by several officials from the university.

King turned toward me and a photographer and said, "Don't get me now, wait till after the speech. I'm still trying to think of what I'm going to say."

Later when we reached Ahearn Fieldhouse on the campus I walked in a few yards behind Dr. King and his host, K-State President James A. McCain.

I hurried to catch up with them. Dr. King knew I was behind him and turned, but did not pause. I thought he seemed a bit aloof. He even seemed to

ignore the Negro students who stopped as he walked by and looked at him with expressions that told how much they admired him.

Soon, Dr. King and McCain were taking huge steps at a rapid pace and I was almost running to keep up with them. I finally reached them and said, nearly out-of-breath, "You two are so athletic I can hardly keep up with you."

Dr. King stopped and started laughing. His coolness seemed to disappear and he joked about being in good shape.

President McCain introduced us and we talked for a moment while the three of us hurried into the arena.

Dr. King said good-by to me with a smile, a different man in my eyes from the cold public figure who had stepped from the plane.

So I think he would have been pleased that last night some of us wanted to smile for a few moments and that a Negro, one of his race for whom he opened the door, made us smile.

That man was Bill Cosby, the comedian and actor, who performed before 9,000 persons in two shows at KU Thursday night.

Cosby learned of Dr. King's death after he came off stage during a break in his first show. He said nothing to the audience and continued the two-hour performance.

The auditorium was filled for the second show and Cosby made it through 90 minutes of his performance and then stopped abruptly at the end of a comedy routine that had the audience doubled with laughter.

"I want to thank all of you who came here tonight," he said. "You had no idea of what

was going to happen after what has happened in Memphis.

"I questioned whether I should come out here and even work tonight. I was stunned as I'm sure many of you are and I know you all came to laugh and you came to forget, so I performed to do that."

Cosby paused and the audience was silent, then he continued, "while performing I cannot forget and I am stunned and I need to take off and just go be with myself for awhile. I humbly apologize to you that many of you who knew or knew of Dr. King need someone to stand by and kind of make you forget for a few minutes. This I tried to do for awhile. However it's kind of getting the best of me."

Cosby told the audience he wanted to apologize for only something of such a nature would keep him from performing.

Then the comedian, who has built his career on non-racial humor and who has been little involved with the public struggle of the Negro for civil rights, offered his thoughts on Dr. King's death.

Advises Cool Heads

"For those of you who realize what this means in a land called America I think we must all join hands and not make any sort of moves that will one day embarrass everyone. We must keep cool heads at this particular time and look out and kind of join hands and look for friends.

"Those of the other group who happen to be sick at this point, I don't know what to do about them. I'm not for jumping around and shooting off heads nor am I for marching out and letting them shoot mine off. However, I do have to take a little time out to be with myself."

V.F. CONVOCAATIONS
 KING, MARTIN LUTHER, JR.
 JAN. 19, 1968