

## *The Greatest Award of All*

**M**artin's work often took him away from home for days or weeks at a time. Whenever he returned he would open the front door very quietly and call out, "Where is everyone?" Then Coretta and the children would come rushing to greet him.

Oh, how the children loved these times when their daddy was home. Martin could seem very serious when he was giving a speech or leading a march. But at home he was full of fun—teasing and tickling and roughhousing with Yoki and Marty and Dexter and Bunny.

One of his favorite things to do was to have one of the children stand halfway up the stairs leading to the second floor. He'd open his arms wide and the child would leap off into space—only to be caught at the last moment.

"He was like a child himself," Coretta remembered. "Sometimes things got so wild that I thought they were going to take the house apart."

But she just smiled and went out to the kitchen to start fixing some of Martin's favorite dishes. What he liked best were what he called "real down-home foods" like pork chops, fried chicken, pigs' feet, black-eyed peas, and turnip greens. "There's no doubt about it," Martin would often chuckle, "eating is one of my *major* sins."

But all too soon it would be time for Martin to pack his suitcase once more. This made the children sad, of course. It also made them proud. "Daddy's away helping other people," Coretta had taught them. "When he's finished, he'll be back."

"That's right," young Marty would add. "Daddy's out fixing things."


Martin Luther King had been given hundreds of awards and medals and honorary degrees. One day in October of 1964 the phone rang at the King house. Coretta picked it up to hear a reporter ask, "Have you heard the news?"

"What news?" she answered.

"Your husband has just won the Nobel Peace Prize for 1964." An international committee had decided that he was the person who had done the most for peace that year in the world.

Martin and Coretta flew to Oslo, Norway, to accept the prize. He sat on the stage of a big auditorium. Before him in the audience sat the King of Norway and many other important people. Slowly the king rose to his feet. Then he began to clap. Soon everyone was standing, clapping the Baptist preacher from the United States of America.



Then Dr. Gunnar Jahn, chairman of the Nobel Committee, introduced Martin as "the first person in the western world to have shown us that a struggle can be waged without violence." 

Trumpets blared. Martin stepped forward to accept his award. He didn't accept it for himself, he said. He accepted it for the millions of Negroes in the United States who were part of the battle to end "the long night of racial injustice."

Most of these people would never make the headlines, he continued, but one day "we will have a finer land, a better people, a more noble civilization—because these humble children of God were willing to suffer."

After the awards ceremony Martin and Coretta visited different places in Europe. Everywhere they went they were cheered by crowds of people. Many American cities honored Martin, too. But what pleased him most was a big dinner given for him by 1,500 black and white citizens of his hometown of Atlanta.



*Martin and Coretta hug after he received the Nobel Peace Prize. Martin was just 35 years old—the youngest man ever to receive the prize.*

Martin's eyes sparkled with excitement as he looked out across the room that night. He was remembering a little boy who wasn't allowed to sit in the front of a shoe store in this very town. He was remembering a man who only five years ago had been arrested for sitting at a nearby lunch counter. Yet here blacks and whites were eating and talking happily—together.