

Former King aide says Powers lied about affair

By TODD MURPHY
Staff Writer

A one-time aide to the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. said yesterday that former Kentucky Sen. Georgia Davis Powers is telling "a bald-faced lie" about having had an affair with the civil-rights leader.

Powers, 71, wrote in her recently released autobiography that she had an intimate relationship with King for about a year and was intimate with him in her room at a Memphis, Tenn. motel the night before he was assassinated in April 1968.

But the Rev. Hosea Williams said he had assigned three people to guard King's room that night.

"Dr. King never left that room (after he arrived there from a rally). And she did not enter the room," Williams said last night.

Williams also said he "traveled,



Williams



Powers

ate and slept" with King the last several months of his life and said King could not have had an intimate relationship with any woman without him realizing it.

"There's no way in the world he could have been seeing somebody without my knowledge," he said.

Former Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young, who Powers says knew of her relationship with King, said yes-

terday he had no recollection of it. Young said he was acquainted with Powers but "I was not aware of her familiarity" with King.

But David Garrow, who wrote a Pulitzer Prize-winning autobiography of King, said in yesterday's Atlanta Constitution that he was aware of King's sexual relationship with Powers — and that King's extramarital affairs filled him with guilt.

The Rev. Ralph Abernathy, King's closest confidant in the civil-rights movement, created a furor among King's friends and colleagues in 1989 when he wrote in his memoirs about King's extramarital relationships — including a liaison with "a black woman ... a member of the Kentucky legislature" the night before King was killed.

Williams said Powers' assertion is "virtually the same lie" Abernathy told — "which ran Dr. Abernathy

insane and finally killed him."

Abernathy, who suffered strokes in 1983 and 1986, died in April 1990 as he was being prepared for a lung scan at an Atlanta hospital.

Williams said Powers is lying to sell books. "The lady is using King. She's lying on him, to make money to raise her prestige," he said.

But Powers — who in 1967 became the first African American to be elected to the Kentucky Senate — said yesterday she told no lies in the book, and that Williams knows it.

"I have told the truth and the truth will prevail," said Powers, who retired from the Senate in 1988.

Of the night before King's death, she said she saw no guards, and "if there were guards it did not prevent what happened from happening, because I know it to be true."

Powers wrote that King had called for her to join him in Mem-

phis and that they were together in her room at the motel. She said she regrets people "cannot accept a simple truth: That ... even the greatest among us is human."

Asked whether people might think that her assertions sully King's reputation, she said: "I don't think it sullies or damages his image in any way. There's nothing that anyone can do to denigrate his image or achievements or his leadership or ability."

She also said she is not trying to garner attention or sell books.

"I have been in the limelight for a long time and I really don't need ... any publicity. My husband and I live comfortably. I merely wrote the story of my life."

Powers said she gave Williams a copy of the book last week when he was in Louisville. She has not heard from him since, she said.