

KUUMBA KORNER

by Dorothy Word

Black History

(2nd in a series)

Amaryllis Martin became an educator in spite of obstacles

In Clarksville, Tenn., the doors of the public library were closed to Amaryllis Martin and other African Americans of her generation. The law of segregation would not allow them access to the thousands of books inside that building.

Amaryllis Martin's mother was determined that "Her" children would have books to read and enjoy. With courageous ingenuity, the elder Mrs. Martin fashioned a deal with the Lloyd



Jewelry Store in Clarksville, where she could rent books for 3¢ a day so that Amaryllis and her brother could at least have limited access to books. Her mother understood the value of reading and the power of books, so it is no wonder that Amaryllis was a reader before she ever started to school.

Although Amaryllis didn't have the opportunity as her white youth counterparts in Clarksville to the wonderful world of books, she did have a direct line to an abundance of positive, inspiring role models. Besides her mother, there was her grandmother, who was the first "colored" girl in her county to be accepted as a student at Fisk University in Nashville, Tenn.; her 6th grade teacher, Mrs Collins, and her high school English teacher at Burt High School. Therefore, when Amaryllis Martin began teaching at Lyles School #7, she had many role models and from these examples she became a role model to others as well.

To be continued...