

★ Mrs. Coppedge, 79, Dies; Ex-Congo Missionary

Mrs. Bessie Sentell Coppedge, 79, a retired Presbyterian missionary to The Congo, died Tuesday at her home, 139 Winnona Drive in Decatur.

Mrs. Coppedge made four trips to what was then The Belgian Congo, with her first husband, Dr. Motte Martin, a dentist in the African country for 43 years. She spent only seven years in the mission field herself because of ill health but was widely known in the Southern Presbyterian Church for her lectures on foreign missions.

Mrs. Coppedge's son, George Motte Martin of Avondale, recalled that when his mother first went to The Belgian Congo in 1909, the natives were selling human flesh in the market places.

Martin said the natives became "extremely loyal" to the mission, however, and recalled one occasion when the "hills were dark with natives coming to protect the mission" from marauding tribesmen.

Mrs. Coppedge's greatest success as a missionary was her conversion of a rebellious native who later became The Congo's best-known native evangelist, Martin said. Mrs. Coppedge was known at the Luebo mission as "Mama Suilo," which means "love for us," Martin said.

Mrs. Coppedge, a native of New Orleans, was graduated from Agnes Scott College. Her second husband was Dr. Lewellyn J. Coppedge, also a missionary to The Congo and to Mexico for many years.

A son, Dr. Walter R. Coppedge, is president of Charleston College in Charleston, S.C. Another son, Col. Dick Coppedge, is a physician at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D. C.

Funeral services will be at 3 p.m. Wednesday at Alexander Memorial Presbyterian Church with the Rev. W. Lamar Hicks and the Rev. Davison Phillips officiating. Burial will be in Decatur Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to a proposed

fund to build a home for women who had been held prisoner during recent fighting in The Congo. Contributions can be sent to the Rev. Mr. Hicks at Alexander Memorial Presbyterian Church in Decatur.

Survivors also include two daughters, Mrs. Harold Thomas, Sparta, and Mrs. Tolly Staples, Rosedale, Miss., and two sisters, Mrs. Stewart Churchill, Donaldsonville, La., and Mrs. Marguerite Fleshman, Baton Rouge, La.