

Observer Writer Reports on Historic Alabama March

By DAVE ELSILA
MONTGOMERY, ALA.—
"We're going to love the hell out of Alabama."

The words — uttered just a few hours before — resounded through the minds of 700 marchers stranded in the Montgomery, Ala., airport early last Friday.

The news had just come to them of the murder, by a night rider's bullet, of a fellow citizen, Mrs. Viola Liuzzo, of Detroit.

The killing had taken place just 25 miles away, down U.S. 80, the highway which runs in front of the airport; the same highway along which 300 civil rights marchers had walked a day earlier on the Selma-to-Montgomery 50 mile trek.

"We're going to love the hell out of Alabama,"

The simple, pointed phrase had been spoken at the conclusion of the historic March by a young Negro minister who stood defiantly in front of the white facade of Alabama's State Capitol.

A Confederate flag waved in the breeze from the capitol dome above his head as he, and a dozen other civil rights leaders, addressed the hush through of demonstrators.

But the flag and the crudely-stitched Rebel emblems on the uniforms of the police — might as well not have been there.

For if this March had proved nothing else, it showed that the "Cradle of the Confederacy" had been irreparably cracked by this magnificent demonstration for human rights. Thousands of Americans, all witnesses for democracy, had streamed into Alabama.

"We're going to love the hell out of Alabama."

The phrase, which the crowd had cheered earlier, came back in the silence of the airport. To many, it was the only balm for their sorrow. They said it again, in another form, when they sang "We Shall Overcome" at memorial services back in Michigan after a 17-hour wait until a replacement came for their disabled airplane.

To this reporter and the other Michiganders, Thursday's march, which we joined for the last four miles, had proved that the solid rock of segregation in Alabama and the deep South was cracking.

The March appeared to mark the beginning of the end of the white supremacy code of the South, and like the legendary hole in the dike, the crack was growing and not even the jabbing fingers of men like Wallace could keep the wall from crumbling.

What made this demonstration the turning point in the civil rights movement in the South?

Very simply, it was the people. The march was supported by those who feel the brunt of segregation in the South, the Negroes, and neither threats nor promises kept them from taking part. For the first time, they were joined by a generous sprinkling of white southerners.

But Southerners were not the only marchers. Americans came from as far away as Hawaii to the west, Maine to the east, from Oregon, from the Virgin Islands. Not because they were "outside agitators" who wanted to cause trouble, but because they were Americans who wanted to make right a part of their land in which the American Dream had failed to materialize.

It was a combination of these two forces — the Southern victims of segregation and a cross-section of the rest of America

that made the March a genuine and irreversible turning point in the history of the South. To those steeped in the traditions of Montgomery and Alabama, the sight of tens of thousands of civil rights demonstrators marching through the streets of that city must have been an impossible sight. The average white citizen was utterly bewildered to note that the largest parade ever to be held in his city had turned out to be a civil rights march.

The picture of the marchers, as they streamed for hours through the streets of Montgomery, was a living testimonial to the forces of love and non-violence which lead the civil rights movement, and an indication of its newly achieved broadness in American society.

Young and old, the marchers were of both sexes and of many professions. Roman Catholic nuns, in their starched black-and-white habits, marched hand-in-hand with Negro civil rights workers. A delegation of 40 U.S. historians was there; there were lawyers, schoolteachers, factory workers, students, and housewives.

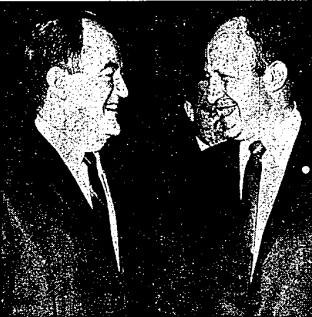
It took an extra dose of courage for white southerners to participate. There was a delegation from the University of Texas and another from SMU in Texas. There were even some white Alabamians, identifying themselves as natives of Huntsville and even of Selma.

Among the marchers was a 70-year-old Negro sharecropper. Wearing a patch on the seat of his pants and an ancient pair of shoes, he marched all four miles with us, having come from Selma for the occasion. "This is the largest crowd I've ever seen," he said, "I know we are going to get our freedom."

Or, put another way, "We're going to love the hell out of Alabama."

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EDWARD McNAMARA, LIVONIA city councilman and 14th District Senatorial candidate, huddled briefly with U.S. Vice President Hubert Humphrey Saturday, while the Vice President visited Detroit. The two conferred on national issues at the Sheraton-Cadillac Hotel. Out of it came a statement from Humphrey backing McNamara's candidacy. "The ability of the Great Society to move forward quickly," he said, "depends upon the election of men like McNamara to our legislatures."

Farmingtonite Named As A Committee Head
Carl Wallt, 2615 Westmeath, Farmington, has been named to head a key committee planning the Detroit-Great Lakes Direct Mail Seminar, to be held March 25-28 at the Statler-Hilton Hotel in Detroit.

Wallt will be in charge of exhibiting the Seminar. He is with the Detroit Edison Company.

New Jaycees

New members of the Redford Township Junior Chamber of Commerce include Elmore Paolucci, Tony Oliveri, Tom Kanie and Jerry Schorn.

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TREASURER of Farmington Township, Elise Avery, with her husband Lawrence and Ray Melvin, Farmington Township Health Inspector were among the 800 that attended the Romney-Roberts Republican dinner at Roma Hall last week. The dinner was sponsored by the Livonia Republican Club.

Harry Smit Opens Office
Gary Gearhart, son of Mr. and Mrs. William H. Gearhart, of 20883 Kenwood, has been promoted to the rank of Cadet Airman third class, in the Air ROTC program at Michigan State University.
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