Emotions spur marchers

By Jim Denney

March to Capitol

The march passed from St. Jude's Hospital in the Negro section to the Alabama Capitol in downtown Montgomery.

Along the street, the sentiment of the situation was well expressed in the faces of those who watched.

The National Guard, some with Confederate flags on their uniforms, had been placed to ensure that there would be no violence. Some smiled cautiously, while most stood silently with a bit of indignation visible in their expressions.

In the section that the march first went through, varied emotions prevailed. An old Negro woman watched as she held a child by the hand. She looked perplexed, even amazed. The child waved passively, and he too seemed cognizant of what was going on.

An elementary school had the children overflowing at the windows.

Shouted Insults

The parade of demonstrators passed through a poor white district. The look here was one of fear and indignation — all together different from what was seen before. Most of the watchers were silent as the group went past.

An exception was the emotion displayed by one family whose home was along the route. Their emotions led them to shout insults. As one woman screamed and cried, her face became flushed, and another woman ran back and forth across the porch.

Taunt Marchers

The business district is where the active hecklers began taunting the marchers.

Obscenities and insults came from faces filled with hate. The whites' look of superiority and indignation was surpassed only by their visible abhorrence of the demonstrators.

The shouts died down as the group approached the Capitol.

The administrators and officials watched stoically from the public buildings as the rally took place.

"Gotta Move"

What one found in Montgomery was a spirit of emotion and identity. The "freedom songs" — "We Shall Overcome," "You Gotta Move," "Oh, Oh, Freedom!" — said so well what the marchers all felt.

The marchers felt fear when the hecklers shouted their insults. We sensed the unashamed hatred of the spectators as they screamed obscenities and made vulgar gestures.

No Flag

We had been indignant at the sight of the banners peculiar to the South and Alabama and at the lack of the national flag on the Capitol.

But these emotions were overcome by the deep feeling that our cause was right.

Famous people, from Joan Baez to Ralph Bunche, appeared on the platform to speak to the demonstration. They spoke of and prayed for those who watched from the steps and windows of the capitol.

The "spirit moved" in Montgomery by determination and commitment. A feeling prevailed among the demonstrators that, in the words of Byron Rustin, "We have overcome."