

# People

## By Wally Troling



### Ministers Walk In Alabama

A Capitola and a Santa Cruz minister joined the great civil rights march between Selma and Montgomery, Alabama, last week to help put into practice what they preach.

The Rev. John T. Whiston, pastor of the St. John's Episcopal church in Capitola, walked the first eight miles out of Selma Sunday. Then last Thursday, the Rev. Bernard Corneliusen, First Congregational church, walked the last eight miles to Montgomery. Their actions were independent of each other.

Whiston, and 13 others, representing the California Episcopal diocese, arrived in Birmingham on the 18th. Calling on the Alabama bishop, they were advised to go home because there "were no problems that couldn't be settled by Alabamians."

"In Selma the next day, preparing for the march, I was impressed by the high calibre of people—businessmen, clergy, students, politicians—thousands who had come to support Rev. King.

"Sunday King addressed 8000 in front of Brown's chapel, then some 5000 lined up eight abreast for the march.

"I was made a marshal, and placed on the flanks to protect the Negroes from bricks and flying bottles.

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"We walked through Selma without incident. But as we crossed the bridge there were groups of whites yelling and carrying signs, 'White Scum Go Home,' 'All Nigger Lovers Get Out of Ala.'"

"There were many Confederate flags. A car sign said: 'Rent Your Priest Suits Here,' suggesting the participants of fake clergy.

"I was afraid, I don't mind telling you. Selma police were taking photos of the Negro marchers.

"I noticed a young couple in a small Volkswagen, with a baby in the back seat. They were screaming curses, their faces contorted with hatred. It made me sad to think of the baby's future.

"There was some spitting. Some just watched with sullen faces.

"At one point I walked to the head of the march and met Dr. King. He was very gracious and so pleased that the clergy was behind the movement.

"We reached the first camp about 6 p.m. From this point only 300 were allowed to continue. We were shuttled back to Selma in cars. It was an education to me to see how powerful is passive resistance as a means of achieving an end," he said.

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The Rev. Mr. Corneliusen first flew to Washington, D.C., with a delegation in an attempt to encourage a stronger approach to the proposed voting rights act. The "teeth" being elimination of poll tax, standardization of the literacy test, and making federal examiners available first to voters who have complaints.

"Congressman Don Edwards from California told us: 'If the clergy had not come to Washington and had not been concerned on this issue, I would have felt that the church only preaches and does not practice; talks about love, but does nothing practical to overcome hate; proclaims brotherhood, but permits intolerance.'"

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Wednesday the Rev. Mr. Corneliusen flew to Montgomery to participate in the march.

"We were advised not to carry aspirin or medicine, lest it be construed as drugs by the zealous police, not to carry a knife or fingernail file (weapons), and to carry money at all times (visible means of support).

"We were told only to take Negro taxis; white cab drivers were not to be trusted. They were boycotting the airport area anyway.

"It just so happened, however, that the marchers were passing the airport on the way to the city, so we joined them there. It rained—poured, and then the sun beat down. The nearly 4000 marchers were strung out for about a mile. This was around noon.

"During the march food was passed. I received a peanut butter sandwich, an orange and two crushed cookies.

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"There was much singing. 'We shall overcome, some day; O deep in my heart, I do believe, we shall overcome someday. We are not afraid; God is on our side; black and white together, we shall all be free. Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe; we shall overcome some day.'"

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"People were all along the route. Most impressive were small clusters of Negroes, smiling, waving, crying and clapping—some yelling, 'God bless you.'"

"State police continued to take movies. We heard that a news photographer took a shot of a state trooper doing this and got clubbed. The national guardsmen were standing with backs to us, scanning the woods for snipers.

"Masses of American flags waved at the head of the march and an old Negro by me called out: 'Man, it's good to see Old Glory again. All we ever see here is the Confederate flag and the Alabama flag!'"

"When it had stopped raining slightly, one white man got out of his car along the side and shook his fist at the sky. He yelled, 'Rain ———, rain on these ———!!'"

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"We walked about eight miles to St. Jude's church, arriving about 3 p.m. That night we slept on the gymnasium floor in our clothing. The Fathers invited the clergy to eat with them in the Roman Catholic rectory. I had to fly home the day of the march through the city.

"At first this whole thing seemed strange to me. I asked myself if my presence was valid, but as I continued to march and think over the reasons for coming, and saw the spirit of the marchers I felt elated. I felt that I could really be a part of this experience of the liberation of the Negro."

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