

Peace March . . . two views

5,000 people praying and yearning together for peace. Then Pete Seeger led us in singing a song whose refrain was "Pacem in terris, mir, shanti, shalom, mei wa," which is "Peace" in different languages. Then, half an hour after the service had officially ended, we felt like we could leave. A good many went straight out and joined the March of Death.

I was with three Canadian guys. We had responded to a plea given earlier for people to volunteer to be "marshalls." It involved training sessions in a Methodist church—so we needed a ride down to attend the 12 mid-night training session and hopefully crash there that night, as we had no way of getting back to our gymnasium. So we asked the crowd of people for a ride down to the city centre. Again the people of Washington were fantastic. Hitching was easy, and they were always helpful.

When you walked in it felt almost like an underground bunker for the Resistance. The marshalls had the vital job of keeping the peace—of handling the crowd, keeping it moving, organizing it, and trouble shooting incidents to keep the crowd cool and avoid the necessity of having the police break up something or bust anyone. The police agreed to keep out of direct involvement with marchers if there were enough marshalls. They got 6,000.

They gave each marshall basic training in the role of marshall as a helpful peacekeeper, and gave tips for handling hecklers (engaging them in conversation) and distracting rock throwers (a girl goes up and gives them a big kiss—it blows their cool). The main directives were to isolate incidents without getting involved in trying to break up fights, keeping the march moving, acting as sources of information, and cooling people down, rapping with the cops (who, by the way, were always really friendly and obviously were as anxious to keep the peace as we were). This wasn't everyone's experience, but it was mine. Cops were much nicer than the troops, though. The troops were ill at ease, because a lot of them sympathized secretly, or felt guilty. After basic training—given by a punchy girl who had been giving sessions round the clock without sleep for three days—we were given assignments and then given special instructions for the special problems we'd encounter.

It was freezing cold and wet: 26 degrees at 7 a.m. We were assigned, with 800 others, to form a human chain of marshalls around the speakers' stand. We had to keep people from going past us, and keep a corridor behind us between the marshalls and the fence for medics and "legals" and other officials to circulate. The crowd didn't come before 11 a.m., so until then we stood around freezing. By about 11 a.m. the huge field between us and the Washington Monument got denser and denser, as a crowd pushed over the hill—and within an hour the whole huge field was black with people. It was impossible to describe the crowd. How can anyone visualize a million-and-a-half people? (official figure). I find it hard.

The mood of the crowd was beautiful. They sat on the freezing wet grass, in that numbing wind and you could just feel the power of so many people coming together for one purpose. In our section we didn't have any incident we couldn't handle—a lost old lady named Rose who was just beautiful, with a "Peace" armband on her long black cloth coat; a lot of pushy press men, and a seven-foot-tall, drunken, amiable negro who we "isolated" by engaging in conversation. He was really quite friendly and while he said some pretty offensive things to passers-by, no one got really mad. His classic line was "shee-it. I'm not prejudice. I just don't like white folks, that's all." And also "what am I doin' heah talking to you? I was on my way over to join my friends in the Black Panthers." One guy fell out of a tree—but one of the 400 medics helped him. People got lost, etc., but the whole thing went unbelievably smooth.

When they mentioned that people should buy buttons to help pay off the thousands of dollars of debt for our little "get-together," a lady out front suggested some marshalls go out and collect money.

I stood in a crowd and said "anyone want to contribute money?" and filled a pocket with dollar bills.

By five o'clock everyone began to disperse—a million-and-a-half people were moving and we still got a ride hitch-hiking within two minutes. Back on the busride home (14 hours), I was so tired I just slept, but I was really hoping that the ride, and the whole weekend, would never end. I felt so close to everyone, especially the three guys I marshalled with. We encountered misunderstanding immediately—a diner wouldn't serve us because we were undesirables—those protestors at the march. And then we got back to Toronto and the headline on the article in The Telegram was "Police teargas 3,000 protestors in Washington."

That was referring to a demonstration by militant SDS students—and three-quarters of those gassed had been spectators. MOBE had not supported the SDS demonstrators. They were the only outbreaks of violence in the whole million-and-a-half beautiful, peaceful attempts to say something.

Non-violence is a powerful, effective, and necessary approach. I think the stage of violence is beginning to pass. When I think of this, I have a picture of a sea of people, all sitting down listening to the speeches and talking quietly among themselves, or thinking.

In the middle, planted deliberately in front of the television cameras was a small island of people standing—militant SDS people with their black and red flags of anarchy and revolution. They are surrounded by a chain of marshalls who act as a buffer between the militants and the peaceful marchers the militants hoped to agitate. True



to the volunteer marshalls' instructions from the organizers of the march, the troublemakers had been isolated by the marchers themselves (not by the cops). They looked out of place and alone.

It was a tremendous feat of organization and effort. It took a lot of hard work, sleepless nights, support and dedication. It could not have happened though, without the good will of the people of Washington.

Underlying it all were a million-and-a-half complex individual reasons for being there, but we were united in the appeal for peace. The peace sign, no longer corny, was universal. It meant "Hi brother" or "Look at me, let's have

peace" depending on whether you were giving it to a fellow marcher or "observer." Old ladies gave it, busloads of school children gave it, negroes gave it, militants gave it, truckloads of troopers gave it, everyone in Washington was giving it this weekend. And hopefully so was the rest of the U.S. All we can do is hope that someone saw it—that Nixon saw it.

At any rate, we have said our peace. And I feel fulfilled in that I've done something. I've described exactly how it was for me. Others may have seen it differently, although, from what I could see, my reaction was typical. Love to you all. Peace. Nancy.