

The March on Memphis

On Thursday March 28, 1968, I awakened excited and ready to participate in The March to be led by Rev. Martin L. King. I was almost ready to depart when my mother suddenly appeared and said, "You aren't going to the march because I've got a funny feeling that something is going to happen. No amount of pleading could make her change her mind, so I missed the March myself.

I kept the radio on in order to keep informed on the March. Suddenly, a breathless announcer broke into the program with the news that there was a riot going on at Hamilton High School and that the students were proceeding to the downtown area. Not long after this, the announcer reported that the March had gotten out of hand and that some people were breaking out windows of stores on Beale Street and were looting the stores.

My oldest sister decided to go down

town and see what was happening. She was gone for quite some time, so I returned to the radio for more information.

My sister returned with news. She reported that she had seen several young men, some of whom she recognized as students at L.S. Moynie, jammed up in a liquor store with all the doors locked. She said the downtown area past the York Arms Co. was ravaged and that the stores had been looted.

Another sister, who had participated in the March, came home with other bits of news. She said that as the people came from the Temple that they were orderly. Suddenly, she continued, a young man ran far in front of her took a stick up and hit the window. Another boy came behind broke out and windows were being smashed and looted.

About that time, the police began to push the crowd back. In the process my sister was shoved and hit. She returned

to the temple with some of the others. There, she said, police arrived and trouble broke out. She got Mace sprayed into her ~~sp~~ eyes and they turned quite red.

All in all the events that happened during the March have pretty much varied with different people, but almost all agree that (1) black power ^{groups} and young people did most of the window breaking and trouble starting and (2) that police used vile language and strong force to get the marchers into lines. I can only say that I wish I had been there.