Mtg. March

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Wet Marchers Pass Halfway Point

TRICKEM, Ala. (AP) — Three hundred leg-weary marchers, dampened by rain, tramped past the half-way point of their 50-mile right-to-vote pilgrimage today after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. left the march.

King temporarily gave up command of the three-day-old highway march to catch a plane to Cleveland, Ohio, and a program in his honor. He planned to return Wednesday or Thursday.

By noon today the marchers had traveled nearly 30 miles. That left about 20 miles more to Montgomery where thousands will join the final march to the state capitol Thursday.

Several hundred battle-ready National Guardsmen, called up by presidential order, and army regulars patroled the highway.

The pace slowed today. The plan was to cover 11 miles, compared to the 17 miles traveled yesterday.

A light rain fell as the marchers broke camp in a pasture at 8 a.m. (CST).

State troopers arrested the Rev. James Bevel, one of King's staff, on a speeding charge near Selma. Bevel signed his $100 bond. He said he was traveling 65 to 75 miles per hour in a 60-M.P.H. zone.

Taking King's place at the head of the line were John Lewis, chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; Albert Turner, a Negro leader from Marion; Attorney Charles Rangle of New York; George Fowler of the New York Commission on Human Rights; and Norman Houston, a Los Angeles NAACP officer.

The number will increase for the final leg of the 50-mile trek into Montgomery, when the highway becomes four lanes again. By order of the judge, the marchers must reach the Capitol building by 4 p.m. Thursday.

The 300 marchers were almost to the halfway point when they bedded down under big tents in a pasture near the Big Swamp of Lowndes County, a fertile land dotted with herds of white-faced Hereford and Black Angus cattle.

The pasture is owned by Rose Steele, a Negro store owner. She did a brisk business in the store selling odds and ends to the marchers after they completed the second day of their five-day walk.

The path ahead for today along the two-lane highway includes deep water on both sides of the road for a mile and a half. This is the Big Swamp.

Along this portion there are five bridges. On the last bridge a blind curve goes into a steep hill and then another blind curve.

The shoulder is no more than four to six feet wide.

Although Lowndes County was described by one Negro minis-

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ter as "worse than hell," the only trouble encountered by the

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marchers so far has been foot blisters. They walked 17 miles Monday and plan to cover 20 today.

While they marched, there were these other developments on the racial scene:

In Washington, Senate leaders said if President Johnson's voting rights bill — aimed at solving Negro grievances — is not passed by April 15, senators will forfeit their Easter recess. Johnson continues to follow progress of the march.

In Cleveland, Ohio, NAACP leaders launch a prospective nation-wide drive against alleged discrimination on federal building projects, vowing to shut down construction of Cleveland's $32-million federal office building if necessary.

At Independence, Mo., former President Harry S. Truman termed "silly" the Selma-Montgomery march. "They can't accomplish a darned thing," he said. "All they want is to attract attention."

The leader of the march to Montgomery, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was joined Monday by his wife.

At one rest stop, King said that his feet were bothering him. He put on an extra pair of socks.

"My feet don't feel so good either," Mrs. King said.

An Army Jeep moved along ahead of the marchers on the highway. It carried a large yellow sign: "Caution. Marchers ahead. Keep right."

Federalized Guardsmen and Army troops accompanied the marchers. At nightfall they ringed the camp again.

King, and the other marchers, also saw billboards showing him at a former interracial school in Tennessee. The caption reads: "Martin Luther King at Communist training school."

King called the billboards an attempt to smear the civil rights movement He said he believes the billboards refer to the Highlander Folk School at Monteagle, which was closed several years ago.

Ned Touchstone, secretary of the Citizens Council of Louisiana, Inc., said his group plans to put up 807 of the billboards throughout the United States.

Other segregationist feelings were expressed on yellow leaflets showered on the marchers by a light airplane. The leaflets called on white citizens to join "Operation Ban," described as "selective hiring, firing, buying, selling."

The leaflets said: "Unemployed agitator ceases to agitate."