

'I Had to Do It,' Soaked Marcher Says

By Paul W. Valentine
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The 40-hour "March Against Death" continued through the city last night as participants endured cold, wind, rain and hail.

Drenched marchers bent into the wind along Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues when a violent thunderstorm burst over the city in midafternoon.

The constant pace and solemn mood of the single-file procession from Arlington Cemetery to the Capitol remained as it had from the beginning the demonstration against the Vietnam war at 6 p.m. Thursday. The march is scheduled to end at about 9 o'clock this morning.

"I got pretty downhearted toward the end," said Robert Neilson, 19, a waterlogged marcher who was doused with rain at the beginning of the four-mile trek and later with a combination of rain and hail.

"But I figured it was worth it and I had to do it."

A sophomore German language student at the University of Connecticut, Neilson had driven from his campus to Washington Thursday night to join the protest demonstrations.

As dusk fell last night, the rain abated, but a chilling wind sent temperatures dropping.

Each marcher carried a white placard bearing the name of an American servicemen killed or a Vietnamese village destroyed in the war.

Participants, under the guidance of the New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, have been assembling in tents at the Virginia end of Memorial Bridge near the gates of Arlington Cemetery.

There, after being instructed on traffic ground rules and nonviolent discipline, the marchers were given placards and, at night, candles.

The participants, mostly young, mostly white, then stepped off across the bridge, keeping to the side-

walks as they threaded their way quietly along Constitution Avenue, up 17th Street, past the White House and then down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol.

In front of the White House, each marcher shouted the name of the dead soldier or destroyed village whose name he carried. At the Capitol, the names were dropped into 12 unpainted wooden coffins.

The march line usually

broke into segments of 20 to 100 individuals each with gaps of up to 100 yards between them as each group had to stop for traffic signals.

Police and mobilization marshals manned each intersection.

Through the day, pedestrians and motorists generally ignored the marchers or stared at them blankly. Occasionally, bystanders

waved or flashed the "V" peace sign.

When the marchers completed the walk, which took 2½ to 3 hours, they looked cold and tired. Marshals directed them to food and rest areas.

Small groups gathered around the 12 coffins and the statue of Gen. U.S. Grant in Union Square at the foot of the Capitol. Conversations were hushed. Few persons smiled.