

3 worked long hours planning tribute to Mitchell

By Ann LoLordo

Within hours of Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr.'s death last Sunday, family and friends of the civil rights leader knew how they would spend the next four days — planning a dig-

nified and eloquent tribute to the man they loved.

And for four days, and just as many sleepless nights, three young men coordinated the efforts of 50 others to ensure that yesterday's memorial service would reflect Mr.

Mitchell's beliefs, accomplishments and the people he served.

Those men — Larry Gibson, Blaine White and Joseph Green — had lots to do. There were dozens of people to notify: senators and congressmen, mayors, civil rights leaders, judges and a former president. "The caliber of people we were talking to, you might have to make three calls to get to them," said Mr. White, a member of the Mitchell family's law firm and a longtime friend.

Those who were attending the service had to be met at the airport or train station and driven to the Sharp Street Memorial United Methodist Church; more than a dozen limousines lined the 500 block of Dolphin street.

"One of the toughest decisions was deciding who gets a reserved seat and who doesn't," Mr. White said.

Although sections of the historic church were set aside for family and personal friends, state and local officials, visiting dignitaries and federal guests, ushers were saying long before the program started, "This door's closed. It's full in here."

Folding chairs, lent by the city, were hastily set up along the aisles to accommodate several guests, including former Vice President Walter F. Mondale, the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson and Colorado Senator Gary Hart, all candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Organizers of the memorial services made sure the candidates did not overshadow the man who was being honored yesterday.

Their names did not appear in the program, nor were they permitted the entourage that usually follows. "I had told them at the outset," Mr. White said, "only the candidates, one reporter, one staff person — unless they brought their spouse. I even had a tete-a-tete with some of the national networks. I was not going to have 3,000 cameras up there."

After the organizers and the family decided who would sit where in the Gothic church, they then had to determine who would eulogize Mr. Mitchell.

"The most difficult task was limiting the program and at the same time guaranteeing there was a representative cross section of the various aspects of Clarence Mitchell's life," said Mr. Gibson, a University of Maryland Law School professor.

On Thursday night, Mr. Gibson "lost sleep over" the printed program, a six-page booklet detailing the "101st senator's" life. By 7 a.m. yesterday, the program was finished. Two hours later, 4,000 copies arrived at the church.

For much of that same 24-hour period, Maj. John C. Lewandowski, of the city police department, was gathering his forces and charting the course of as many as 100 officers: undercover officers to accompany the candidates, motorcades to usher visiting guests through town in a clip, special squads to search for bombs on the ground and snipers on the roofs, and officers to direct traffic and con-