



(Photo by Jim Burton)

Peace Pilgrim's Progress

(Written after my 1000 mile pilgrimage through Florida)

DEAR FRIENDS OF PEACE:

At the end of my Florida pilgrimage I spent a week in Miami, and this week culminated in a meeting of representatives from organizations in Miami which are working on some phase of the peace picture. They enthusiastically formed the Miami Peace Committee, which is to coordinate Miami peace activities, and agreed upon a Coordinator. From the very beginning of my pilgrimage I noticed that people deeply desire peace — now I believe they are ready to work for it!

I GET ACQUAINTED WITH FLORIDA

If you want to get acquainted with a state try walking 1,000 miles there, which is what I did in Florida in the winter of 1958. It was a continuous walk, beginning in Pensacola and — after much zigzagging to touch all the large centers of population — ending in Miami. In the beginning I got acquainted with the Gulf Coast — where the water is such a beautiful green and the sand is so white it looks like snow. Toward the end I got acquainted with the Indian River — a wide, salt water river separated by a sand bar from the sea. In between I got acquainted with a variety of lakes and streams and springs. I got acquainted with the abundant water birds — especially the graceful white herons with long black legs. I got acquainted with numberless pine trees and palm trees and palmettos, and with the flexible banyan tree which can climb a palm tree like a vine or put down roots from high branches. I got acquainted with air plants. One of them looks like the top of a pineapple, but the one you cannot fail to notice is Spanish moss. Here a holly tree is so festooned with silvery Spanish moss and so laden with bright red berries that it looks like a Christmas tree. There a deciduous tree is so hung with Spanish moss and so covered with clumps of mistletoe that you do not realize it has lost its leaves. I got acquainted with sandspurs — but that was not my first acquaintance with them, as they are widely scattered throughout the country. If it had not been for the freezes I would have gotten acquainted with more flowers, but there were some and they were lovely — I could not help noticing flame vines. Most important of all, I got acquainted with lots of friendly people, both natives and visitors. If you want to meet people from all over the United States and Canada, just visit Florida in the winter.

KEEPING UP WITH THE TIMES

I understand that the expression “See you later, Alligator,” originated in Florida, where “Alligator” is a nickname sometimes given to college students. However, now that all those “moons” have been launched from Florida, they have a more up-to-date expression, which is “See you tonight, Satellite,” and the reply is “In the void, Asteroid.”

IF YOU LIKE VARIETY

One thing I can truthfully say about Florida weather — it is changeable! It reminds me of the rhyme about the little girl with the little curl right in the middle of her forehead. You will recall that when she was good she was very, very good, but when she was bad she was horrid. I'm afraid Florida showed its worst side while I was there, for there were three bad freezes — which were tragic for the farmers and the migrant workers. In spite of that, the evening of the first freeze I for the good days were just about of this I remember Florida weather favorably, was surprised to see that folks had turned on their lawn sprinklers. In the morning grass and bushes were coated with ice, which, strange as it may seem, saved

them from the killing frost. I did see some frozen citrus groves, but I noticed no shortage of citrus fruit. All through Florida I feasted on delicious oranges and grapefruit, and if no grove was handy there always seemed to be fruit by the roadside which had rolled off the trucks. A scientist I was talking to explained that the unusual weather was due to nuclear explosions. He said we have no idea of the consequences of what we are doing. He said that if we survive we will look back upon these times as a period of madness.

A ROADSIDE EXPERIENCE

A fine car stopped, and a well dressed couple began to talk with me. I started to explain to them what I was doing.

Suddenly, to my amazement, the man burst into tears. He said "Because I have done nothing for peace, you have to do so much!"

HOW SIMPLY CAN WE LIVE

Our physical needs depend somewhat on the climate in which we live, the state of our health, etc. In general we will

need a shelter to protect us from the elements, a fire — a blanket — some clothing for warmth, pure water and sufficient food for sustenance. Material possessions much in excess of our needs tend to become burdensome. There are, of course, needs beyond the physical. These often involve little or no expenditure of money, but this is not always so. For instance, there are some people whose lives are not complete unless they can listen to good music or play some musical instrument. While suggestions may be made as to simple living, simplifying our lives is an individual problem for every one of us.

TO THOSE INTERESTED IN SIMPLE LIVING

If you are free, may I recommend a hiking trip on a wilderness footpath? How inspiring it is to walk all day in the sunshine and sleep all night under the stars. What a wonderful experience in simple, natural living. Since you carry your food, sleeping equipment, etc., on your back, you learn very quickly that unnecessary possessions are unnecessary burdens. You soon realize what the essentials of life are — such as warmth when you are cold, a dry spot on a rainy day, the simplest food when you are hungry, pure cool water when you are thirsty. You soon put material things in their proper place, realizing that they are there for use and relinquishing them when they are not useful. You soon experience and learn to appreciate the great freedom of simplicity.

THE LESSON FOR TODAY

Evil cannot be overcome by more evil — evil can only be overcome by good. This is the lesson for today — it is the

lesson of the way of love. The contest in the world today is between the old way of attempting to overcome evil with evil, which with modern weapons would lead to complete chaos, and the new way of overcoming evil with good, which would lead to glorious life. Much research and experimentation needs to be done on peaceful ways of resolving conflicts. Long overdue is a Peace Department through which those who accept the new way could work. But we need not wait for that. We can work as groups or as individuals right where we are, undertaking specific peace projects, commending and strengthening the good wherever we find it, remembering that every time any inharmonious situation has been brought into harmony something has been accomplished for peace.

THIS CRISIS PERIOD

This is a crisis period in human history. We who live in the world today must choose between a nuclear war of destruction and a golden age of peace. On the peace front I am aware of two things. The stirring and awakening, which is accelerating, and which I have faith will accelerate sufficiently to turn the tide toward peace. The fact that the tide of world affairs still drifts toward war, and that it will take

a real effort on the part of the people of the world to turn this tide. In the face of this crisis situation I dedicate my life to help turn the tide toward peace, using the weapons of love, which is the only weapon that can be used, and I invite YOU to work with me.

PEACE PILGRIM'S PLEDGE

Believing that war is contrary to the will of God and to common sense, and feeling that the way of peace is the way of love, I shall work for peace by using the way of love myself, by helping any group I am a part of to use it, by helping the nation of which I am a citizen to use it, by helping the United Nations to use it, and by praying that the way of love be used all over the world.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

A minister I know spent some time in Russia. He saw no Russian children playing with guns. He visited the large toy stores in Moscow, and discovered that there were no toy guns for sale.

CLOSING THOUGHT

Those who have overcome self-will and become instruments to do God's work can accomplish tasks which are seemingly impossible, but they experience no feeling of self-achievement.

Peacefully yours,

PEACE PILGRIM
Cologne, N. J.
