



(Photo by Jim Burton)

Peace Pilgrim's Progress

(Written after my 1000 mile pilgrimage through New England)

DEAR FRIENDS OF PEACE:

One of the very good things which is happening as we arouse a bit from our lethargy is the formation of Community Peace Committees, whose purpose is to approach prayerfully, think through, talk through and act upon the problems in connection with world peace. There should be such-a group in every community. There are groups for every other purpose. Why are we neglecting the world's number one problem? I would like to hear from those who are interested in Community Peace Committees.

BEAUTIFUL NEW ENGLAND

During the summer of 1958 I walked in the extreme northeastern part of the United States - in New England. I began in Greenwich, Connecticut, and ended in Burlington, Vermont — zigzagging a lot in between to touch not only the large towns but also the smaller towns to which I had been invited, and visiting some towns on my way out that I had not been able to walk through on my 1,000 mile pilgrimage. I started among the apple blossoms — I walked among them when they were pink buds and when their falling petals were white as falling snow. I ended among the ripened apples, which supplied me with some very tasty meals. In between I feasted on luscious wild strawberries and blackberries and blueberries. When I started, gardens were fragrant with a magnificent rainbow of spring flowers, and hills and valleys vied with one another in a display of springtime blossoms. I walked amid the peaceful evergreen trees and the lovely graceful white birches, and many times I paused 'neath the wonderful thick shade of the maples to admire and enjoy the abundant summer blooms. When I ended there were autumn flowers in the gardens and the first few bright-tinted leaves had appeared on the hillsides. New England is a land of placid lakes and rushing mountain streams and miles and miles of picturesque seacoast with rocks strewn into the sea. New England is a land of hills and mountains, and the less lofty ones are no less scenic than the stately White Mountains of New Hampshire or the rolling Green Mountains of Vermont or the scattered peaks of Maine. Once you have seen New England's scenic beauty you understand why one of New England's chief industries is "Tourists".

OLD NEW ENGLAND

I slept in a canopied four-poster bed in a room with wide uneven floor boards and window-panes which give a rather distorted view of the world outside. The chair I sat in was not particularly comfortable, but it was a genuine antique. I was staying in the home of a rather well-to-do New England family. If a family of moderate means had offered me shelter I would probably have slept in a new house. In New England one finds a reverence for that which is old and a reticence about that which is new. This does not apply only to houses and furniture, it applies also to customs and traditions. For instance, it was not too difficult to get Community Peace Committees started in New England, because working things out in a town meeting is one of the New England traditions. New England has been writing history for well over 300 years now, and in this young country that is a very long time indeed.

THE FRUITS OF SACRIFICE

I began my New England walk by covering the same route — in a reverse direction — that the Walk

for Peace from New Haven covered, and I met some of the walkers. It was not always easy for them — often their feet were sore and tired and they were exhausted — but they made the sacrifice, and, because they were willing to make the sacrifice, their plea for the cessation of nuclear to the four corners of the world. I am told the story was used on Radio Moscow. This crisis period requires dedication and sacrifice. The tide of world affairs still drifts toward war, and it will take a real effort on the part of the people of the world to turn it toward peace.

TO ALL PEACE PIONEERS

When I see the stirring in the direction of peace now, I cannot help feeling grateful to the peace pioneers, who worked for peace when the going was rough and there were no apparent results. But all right work and all right prayer does eventually bear fruit! Now peace is an idea whose time has come!

THE FREEDOM OF SIMPLICITY

This morning for breakfast I had blueberries covered with dew, picking them from the bushes as I journeyed through the New England mountains, and I thought of my fellow human beings eating various kinds of processed and flavored foods, and I realized that if I could choose my breakfast from all the foods in the world I could not make a better choice than blueberries covered with dew. Later in the day I took a swim in a clear lake, and afterward, as I put on my simple clothing, I thought of those who have closets full of clothes to take care of, and who carry heavy luggage with them when they travel, and I wondered how people could want to so burden themselves, and I felt wonderfully free. To the world I may seem very poor, walking along penniless and wearing or carrying in my pockets my only material possessions, but I am really rich in blessings which no amount of money could buy — in health and happiness and inner peace.

VERMONT'S GOVERNOR JOHNSON

The picture shows me talking with Governor Johnson in front of the Vermont State House. This was my second visit with him, and I well remember the day I met him in 1956. As I stepped inside the big front door of the State House, a nice friendly gentleman greeted me and shook my hand and asked if he could help me. I told him I was looking for the Governor's office, and he promptly took me there. "Is there anything else I can do to help you?" he asked. "I thought I might have the privilege of shaking hands with the Governor" I said. "You have shaken hands with the Governor" said the nice friendly gentleman — Vermont's Governor Johnson.

COMMITTEE ON PEACEFUL ECONOMIC CHANGE

Knowing that spiritual immaturity is the real cause of our difficulties in this world, I usually work on increasing the maturity; but occasionally a symptom becomes acute and little is being done about it, and that was why I convened the Committee on Peaceful Economic Change. We had a good national meeting, and now regional groups are being formed. Members of the committee must be able to say: "I am committed to the way of non-violence. I believe peaceful economic change is possible. I think economic adjustment to peace is vitally important. I wish to do what I can to help. I therefore join the Committee on Peaceful Economic Change." If you are interested in working on this acute national problem please let me hear from you.

JOYOUSNESS IS GODLINESS

I once met a man who said to me "I'm surprised at the kind of person you are. After reading your very serious message on the way of peace I expected you to be a very solemn person, but instead I find you just bubbling over with joy." I said to him "Who could know God and not be joyous?" If you have a long face and a chip on your shoulder, if you are not radiant with joy and friendliness, if you are not filled to overflowing with love and good will for all beings and all creatures, and all creations, one thing is certain — you have not found God!

THAT WHICH I FEARED CAME UPON ME

A pessimistic attitude is detrimental to the pessimist and to the world, for in dwelling upon and expecting and fearing war or catastrophe of any kind we attract the very thing we fear. Those who think only positive thoughts stay in harmony with the higher laws and attract only good. We fear because, in our spiritual immaturity, we identify ourselves with the garment of clay we wear, which is destructible. Instead of with the reality — that which activates the garment of clay — which is not destructible. The reality can only be injured by our own wrong actions or our own wrong reactions, both of which we have control over. For instance, our sins of omission when in this crisis situation we do not do everything we can for peace in the world — do much greater damage than nuclear bombs, for they injure what is real, not what is transient.

RANDOM THOUGHTS

You will have peace, people of the world, when you learn to desire the things you cannot have with war instead of the things you cannot have without war.

Physical violence can end even before we have learned the way of love, but psychological violence will continue until we do. Only outer peace can be had through law. The way to inner peace is through love.

I would not wish for you a life without problems, because such a life would be a barren existence, without any opportunity for spiritual growth. It is through solving problems correctly that we grow spiritually.

There is never really anything to be discouraged about, because difficulties are opportunities for inner growth, and the greater the difficulty the greater the opportunity.

If you but knew how short is the earth life in comparison with the whole, you would be less worried with the difficulties of the earth life than you are worried now with the difficulties of one of your days.

Lovingly and peacefully yours,

PEACE PILGRIM, Cologne, N. J.
