

Peace Pilgrim Marches On and On

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Start Hike Across U.S. as
Antiwar Bid."

"The world situation is grave," Peace Pilgrim said gravely. "Unless we awake from our lethargy and push firmly and quickly away from chaos, all that we cherish will be destroyed in the holocaust which will descend."

The article also reported that her real name was Mildred.

Apparently the United States or the world pushed quickly away from chaos, because Peace Pilgrim was back in 1955 in "Woman Plods Over Nation for Peace."

Pilgrim was back in 1955 in "Woman Plods Over Nation for Peace."

Peace Pilgrim said she had plodded 5,000 miles during the 1953 hike, praying "for real peace in Korea, establishment of a Peace Department in the President's Cabinet and world disarmament and reconstruction."

The reporter who wrote this one managed to slow Peace Pilgrim down long enough for a few tantaliz-

ing details of her life.

Peace Pilgrim (or Mildred, as she was then known) was born on a farm in New Jersey around the turn of the century. She did office work for the Friends for 15 years, but found herself increasingly dissatisfied with her life.

One evening she grew so restless that she wandered

most of the night through a New Jersey woodland. At length she came to a moonlit glade and prayed. "Please use me," she asked God and a great peace came over her. She's been walking ever since.

An unfortunate gap exists in the public record and it is not until 1969 that we find Peace Pilgrim in print again. "Woman to Begin 5th Walk Across the U.S. for Peace," was the headline.

By this time, Peace Pilgrim has walked 25,000 miles and long since quit counting.

"I think I can testify to the goodness of mankind, for I always walk until I'm given shelter and fast until I'm given food," Peace Pilgrim said.

Peace Pilgrim also said she got about 1,500 miles to a pair of shoes.

That brings us up to date. One morning late last week Peace Pilgrim appeared downtown incredibly bright-eyed for a practically predawn interview.

Spurning the traditional offer of coffee, she got

right into the heart of the matter.

"My life work is for peace — not only peace among nations and groups, but peace among individuals and the very important inner peace.

"This year I'm in my sixth pilgrimage. I've started all of them in California. California, of course, is almost like covering a second country. I'm taking eight months in California this time. No other state requires more than three."

"I have more invitations

in California, actually. I spend a great deal of time at churches. My record is seven sermons on one Sunday. I also speak a great deal at colleges, high schools and service groups."

When she isn't talking, Peace Pilgrim, naturally, is walking.

"I started by walking ahead of the line of march at the Tournament of Roses parade," she said. "The freeways very much interfered with my walking. But I don't fight the

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PEACE PILGRIM

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freeways now. I find mountains and walk along beaches now."

However, all things considered, Peace Pilgrim isn't wearing out tennies as she did in earlier days.

"Now I put speaking first, then answering the mail (a letter addressed to Peace Pilgrim, Cologne, N.J., will reach her, she says) and walk when I find the time."

The subject changed to Peace Pilgrim's past life and she barely missed a pace:

"I had a 15-year preparation period for the first pilgrimage. I did the spiritual growing up. That begins at the time you are ready to leave the self-centered life. Thirty-six years ago, I had money and possessions but my life was empty, meaningless and unhappy.

"Then I stopped living to

get and started living to give. At that point my life just blossomed out. I attained the great gift of health and I haven't had a cold or headache since.

"My friends thought I had taken leave of my senses when I began my pilgrimages, but I walked with that endless energy of inner peace."

Peace Pilgrim was pressed for more details of her early life, but said she preferred to remain vague.

"I have taken the position from the very begin-

ning that I would only tell what is really important," she said sternly.

Peace Pilgrim admitted that she was once picked up as a vagrant back in 1953, but all her experiences on the road since have been pleasant ones.

"I don't accept money. I only accept food, clothing and shelter when I need it. When I open my mail, a little bit of money falls out. So I'm able to get out some literature free of charge."

"No," she responded.