

# Peace Pilgrim criss-crossed the country with

By BILL EDSON  
News and Eagle Staff

Known only by her adopted name, Peace Pilgrim walked the highways of America for almost three decades, a tiny blue dot on the nation's landscape, a prickle on the country's conscience.

She owned nothing, asked for nothing and gave freely her message of peace among nations and love of mankind.

During her lifelong pilgrimage she visited Enid five times, the first on her second cross-country pilgrimage in 1955, the second time on her fourth tour in 1968, and again in 1971, 1975 and 1980.

In the years of the '60s and '70s when the anti-war movement was sweeping the country, her presence was considered a threat by some who misunderstood her motives. To the others who were taking to the streets in protest, the silver-haired spectre they found preaching their cause ahead of them was viewed with

some suspicion.

In fact, she was no menace to anyone. She was neither extremist nor radical. She was just Peace Pilgrim. She admitted to no other name and provided no details of her former life, her age, her family, nothing personal about herself except her mission in life.

Between 1953 when she walked away from a life she considered meaningless and 1981 when she died in an automobile accident in Indiana, she criss-crossed America alone and on foot, bringing to anyone who would listen her message of peace, love and understanding.

She had no luggage, just a few personal items she carried in the pockets of her blue tunic, a comb, a stub of a pencil, a stamp or two for letters. Those and the clothes on her back were her worldly possessions. She was completely dependent on the generosity of others for

## WINDOW ON THE PAST

her daily subsistence. She never asked for donations. She ate if someone asked her to share a meal with them and she slept if someone offered her a bed in their home. If not, she did without food and slept beside the road.

Her last visit to Enid was at the invitation of Dr. and Mrs. Irving Smith, then minister of the First United Methodist Church and a friend and avid fan of Peace Pilgrim. She had friends like the Smiths all across the nation and as the years went by, she was able to establish a network of friends who could call around the country to find her or leave a message.

During her last visit here she attended a concert at Phillips University, spoke at a meeting of church women and to a sociology class at the university.

Each crossing of the country took her several years to complete. She would begin at one coast and start her journey according to the season. In the spring and summer she walked north and in the fall and winter she sought the warmth of the southern states. She walked across the nation in a sawtooth pattern, stopping occasionally for a few days to visit friends before pushing on.

During her first pilgrimage she tried braving the weather and almost froze to death. Her uniform, both winter and summer was never more than simple slacks, a shirt, tunic, and canvas shoes. Other travelers on the road gave her advice on basic survival techniques that enabled her to make it through years on the road without serious incidents.

On her last visit to Enid in December 1980, she outlined her plans for the future, both long and short term. From Enid she planned to go to Bartlesville and Tulsa, south to Muskogee, back west to Oklahoma City, Norman, Wayne and then on south to Dallas where she would spend Christmas with an order of nuns. During January, February and part of March she would tour Texas and Louisiana before heading north in the spring like a migratory bird.

She had speaking engagements booked into 1984 and had plans to return to Alaska and Hawaii. She expressed thoughts of organizing "in-spiritual tours" through several states in the years to come.

She never planned to retire but instead said she would maintain the vow she made when she began her pilgrimages 28 years earlier, "to remain a wanderer until mankind has