

'HIKING FOR PEACE'

Woman in Town After 6-Year, 15,000-Mile Walk

By OTTO REYNOLDS

A silver-haired woman set out on a hike in Los Angeles in January, 1953. Nearly six years and more than 15,000 miles later she walked into Prescott.

She came yesterday by way of Jerome. She will stop here one week with Mrs. and Mrs. Fred Ryan, Tall Trees Motel, then hoof down U. S. 89 to Phoenix. She plans to see world peace or mark the rest of her life in steps on North American roads.

Her proper name, parentage and birthplace are mysteries. She is about 50 years old and identifies herself only as "Peace Pilgrim." She owns just the clothing she wears, toothbrush, comb, pencil and a few strips of paper.

The Pilgrim's self-imposed task is to "remain a wanderer until mankind has learned the ways of peace, walking until I am given shelter and fasting until I am given food."

Wearing navy blue slacks and shirt and a short tunic with pockets for her few possessions, the Pilgrim first impresses viewers as a crackpot undergoing initiation rites of a weird cult. The tunic's white lettering reads "PEACE PILGRIM" in front and "WALKING 25,000 MILES FOR WORLD PEACE" in back.

Actually, the Pilgrim is a quick-witted woman, apparently well-educated and sincere in her effort of preaching peace.

"Overcome evil with good and falsehood with truth and hatred with love . . ." she suggests. "Please don't say lightly that these are just religious concepts and not practical. These are laws governing human conduct, which apply as rigidly as the law of gravity. . ."

This is her first stop in Prescott, though she has been in Arizona three times. She will walk in this state and in New Mexico this winter.

She traveled 5,000 miles, zigzagging to New York City, in her first year on the road. She spent about 200 full days of walking. She didn't count the miles in '54, racked up another 5,000 in 1955 and '56.

"Since then I walk about 2,000



MYSTERY WOMAN—A middle-aged, silver-haired woman walked into Prescott yesterday by way of Jerome. She identifies herself only as "Peace Pilgrim." She plans to keep walking until world peace seems probable. The Pilgrim started in Los Angeles nearly six years ago.—(Courier Photo)

miles a year—1,000 in the north in summer, 1,000 in the south in winter. I stop to meet people, for visiting and speaking engagements."

The Pilgrim has hiked in 48 U.S. states, 10 Canadian provinces and in Mexico.

She is probably the only such traveler in the U.S.A.

The Pilgrim, interviewed on her

first day in Prescott, had these comments:

On her walk—"When I reach 25,000 miles (the goal printed on her tunic), I'll just stop counting. I plan to continue my pilgrimage until a time when the tide of world affairs is drifting as strongly toward peace as it is now drifting toward war."

On progress towards peace—"I think we're closer now than when I started."

On Khrushchev's U.S. trip—

"I'm glad he came over. I wanted him to see us and get to know us."

On further visits of heads of states to foreign countries—"I think an extensive exchange of people on all levels is necessary for world peace."

Concerning the cause of wars—"Immaturity—war wouldn't be a problem if people grew up mentally and spiritually."

On religion—"I consider all churches stepping stones to God. This is a religious journey, but not a denominational one."

And how does the constitution of a middle-aged woman hold up under such a schedule: "I haven't had the slightest illness since I started," she said.

"Most ministers—in fact, most college professors—understand my pilgrimage."

The fact that she has neither starved nor suffered for a place to sleep—in spite of her penniless state—proves Americans are warm hearted and that "there is a greatly increased willingness to work for peace," the Pilgrim said.

"Two steps toward peace which I think should be taken now are the establishment of a world language to be taught as a second language in all the schools of the world, and the establishment of a peace department in our government to do extensive research on peaceful ways of resolving conflicts."