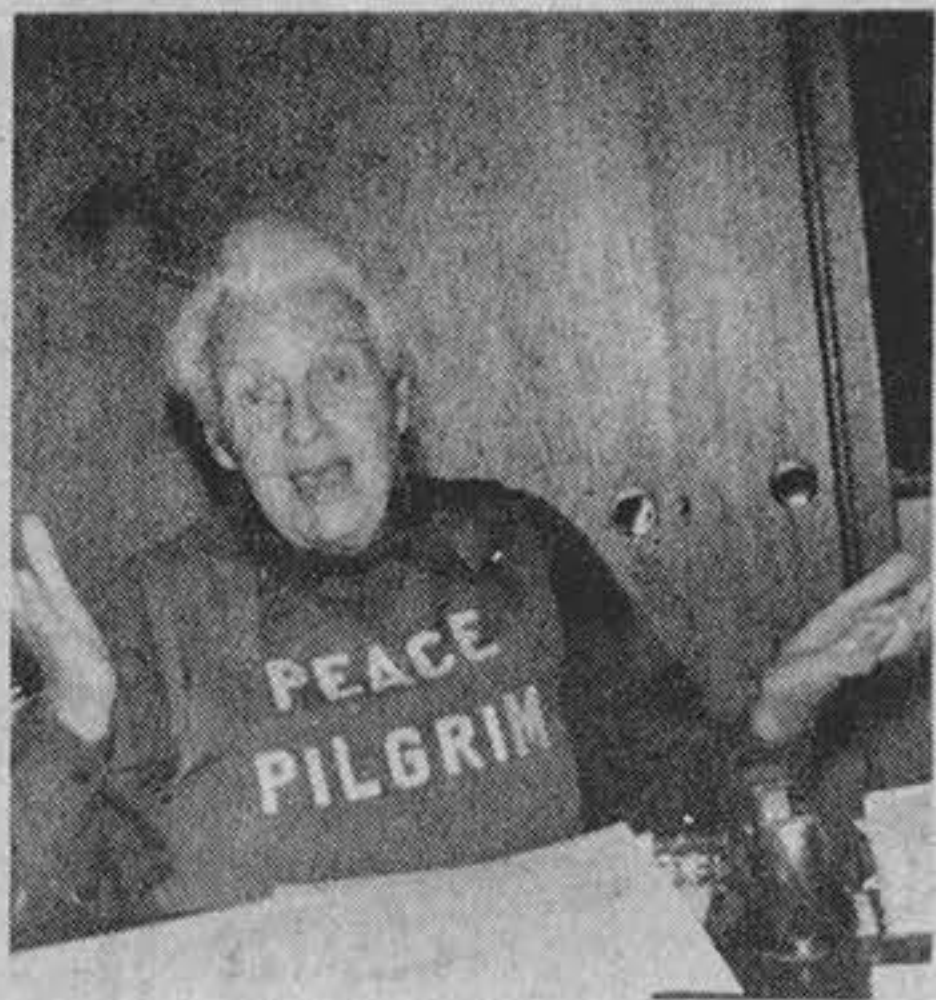


Peace Pilgrim is still walking, but she's not counting miles now

by Paul Stewart

Peace Pilgrim started walking on Jan. 1, 1953. By 1964, she had completed counting the 25,000 miles she had set as her goal to walk as a peace pilgrimage.



EXPRESSIVE AND SINCERE is a good description of Peace Pilgrim [above] who stopped in the offices of the Suncoast Shopper & News during her current stay in the Upper Suncoast area. She started her pilgrimages in 1953 and will wind up her sixth such trek for peace in February. What then? Then, she'll start No. 7.

But, she hasn't stopped walking, just stopped counting the miles.

Peace Pilgrim is in the Upper Suncoast area during the month of December, walking and talking with anyone who wants to talk about peace — the outer peace and the inner peace. The vibrant, white-haired lady wears her suit of blue, topped by a blue tunic on which the letters "Peace Pilgrim" appear on front and "25,000 miles on foot for Peace" on the back.

She has a busy schedule lined up with speaking engagements before such groups as the Northwest Pasco Lions Club in Hudson, the Hudson United Methodist Church and time out for short trips to Eckerd College and Gainesville and Ocala for speaking engagements. (There are some open dates, however, and groups wishing to hear Peace Pilgrim can book her by calling 868-1745. She does not accept any fees or love offerings for her talks.)

WHEN SHE STOPPED counting the miles in 1964, she said, two things changed in her life.

"For one thing, instead of staying on the main highways, I began to walk through the cities, along beaches and through parks and college campuses — the places where people are," she said.

There was a change in her priority, too, she said, so that talking with people came ahead of counting the miles walked.

"I have covered all 50 of the United States, the ten provinces of Canada and parts of Mexico," she said.

When she finishes walking and talking in Florida at the end of February, she will have completed her sixth pilgrimage route. "Then I will head for California to start my seventh pilgrimage," she said.

In describing her pilgrimages, Peace Pilgrim said:

"Now, remember these pilgrimages are undertaken in the tradition of pilgrimages. They are undertaken on faith. There isn't any visible means of support. I have no money and I don't even accept any money.

"I OWN ONLY what I wear and the few little things I carry in my tunic pockets. I don't belong to any organization. I just walk until given shelter and fast until given food."

"I don't even ask," she exclaimed. "It's given without asking. I tell you people are good."

Peace Pilgrim stressed that she doesn't approach people — they approach her. "And those who come are either genuinely interested or they have

a good, lively curiosity," she said.

Ask Peace Pilgrim about what she did before she became Peace Pilgrim and the answer is general in terms that she made a lot of money but she tells you nothing specific. Ask her how old she is and the answer, given with a great deal of sincerity, is "I do not know and I do not intend to figure it out."

A POPULAR, ENTERTAINING and thought-provoking speaker Peace Pilgrim speaks on steps toward inner peace in many of her appearances. In churches she speaks on living God's laws and in the colleges she discusses a wide range of topics including sociology, psychology and philosophy.

Ask Peace Pilgrim about her background before she started her preparations for the pilgrimages and her answer is:

"You're asking about the time before I started my spiritual growing-up which was a meaningless time of making money and spending it foolishly."

Peace Pilgrim sums up her message as:

"This is the way of peace. Over come evil with good and falsehood with truth, hatred with love. There's nothing new about it, of course, except the practice of it."