

[USA's "Peace Pilgrim"](#)

Category : [January 1997](#)

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Her life's march was both medium and message

Renunciation in India is arduous enough, even though there it has been the most esteemed spiritual path since before recorded history. In America, it is even harder, where striving to live a homeless renunciate's life could well result in ridicule and arrest for vagrancy. Yet, from 1953 until her great departure in 1981, an extraordinary silver-haired American woman lived this life to perfection. She gave herself the name "Peace Pilgrim" and vowed: "I shall remain a wanderer until mankind has learned the way of peace, walking until I am given shelter, and fasting until I am given food." Walk she did, criss-crossing the United States many times. She refused to reveal her previous name, or be identified in any way other than "Peace Pilgrim."

What she taught will strike the Hindu as pure Vedanta, but her spiritual awakening was completely spontaneous, tied to no organized religion, East or West. She was not a Christian, never even entered a Christian church until she was 16, and then only to attend a friend's wedding.

"It came to me that God is a creative force," she revealed, "a motivating power, an over-all intelligence, an ever-present, all-pervading spirit--which binds everything in the universe together and gives life to everything. That brought God close. I

could not be where God is not. You are within God. God is within you."

With this knowledge firmly in her heart and mind, she walked as a prayer and a chance to inspire others to pray and work for peace, averaging 25 miles a day. She wore navy blue shirts and slacks, and a short tunic with pockets all around the bottom in which she carried her only worldly possessions: a comb, a folding toothbrush, a ballpoint pen, copies of her message and her current correspondence. She carried no money and would walk until offered lodging or food. At times she would miss a few meals, but generously complained, "My real problem is everyone wants to overfeed me!"

Her travel was not without danger. On one occasion a disturbed youth started to beat her. "I bathed his hatred with love even while he hit me," she said. "As a result, the hitting stopped, and this boy was never violent again." Another time she accepted a ride from an unseemly character. She woke after a short nap to find the man crying and confessing he meant her harm, but simply could not touch her. Such incidents were rare. "No one walks so safely as those who walk humbly and harmlessly with great love and great faith," she said. She did spend a few nights in jail, but was always released when the police understood her mission.

After walking 25,000 miles, which took 11 years up to 1964, she stopped counting miles, and speaking became her first priority, though she continued her daily trek. She met with people on city streets and dusty roads, in ghettos, suburbs, deserts and truckstops. She became a popular and revered

figure often interviewed by the TV, radio and press, invited to talk at schools and churches across the country.

Peace Pilgrim believed we have entered a crisis period in human history, "walking the brink between a nuclear war of annihilation and a golden age of peace." She felt it was her calling to arouse people from apathy and get them thinking and actively working for peace. She encouraged people to seek the real source of peace within.

Once relentlessly questioned by a reporter about her "true identity," she responded, "This clay garment is one of a penniless pilgrim journeying in the name of peace. It is what you cannot see that is so very important. I am one who is propelled by the power of faith. I bathe in the light of eternal wisdom. I am sustained by the unending energy of the universe. This is who I really am!"

Friends of Peace Pilgrim will send a free book on her life anywhere in the world. Write to Peace Pilgrim, 43480 Cedar Avenue, Hemet, California 92544 USA.